THE MIJIKENDA AND MOMBASA TO c. 1930

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Abstract

The Mijikenda are a group of nine peoples who live on the coast around, and in the immediate hinterland of, Mombasa. Their identity as the Mijikenda is a recent construct, and is structured around traditions of migration from a common place of origin in the north, called Singwaya. These traditions have also been employed by elder males within Mijikenda groups to explain and legitimate the institutions around which their power is based.

Until the 1940s, all the Mijikenda peoples were called the Nyika, defined as such in opposition to the Swahili who live in the coastal towns. Individuals could and did change their identity from a Nyika one to a Swahili one, and the two identities, while they were in opposition, were parts of a single paradigm. Ties of kin cut across the boundary between the two identities. This fluidity of identity on the coast gave the hinterland people a considerable ability to avoid the demands of the colonial state. In the context of a labour shortage on the coast, the permeability of Swahili identity was perceived as a considerable problem by colonial authorities. They instituted a number of measures intended to reduce the influence of the Swahili and Arabs over hinterland people and to redefine ethnicity. These policies and economic changes in Mombasa transformed relationships on the coast, and in particular they changed the way in which migrants moved to Mombasa. A Mijikenda identity grew out of these changes, following but essentially paralleling the use by some Swahili of the Twelve Tribes title as an exclusive identity which denied membership of the group to more recent immigrants.

For Susan

Contents

Acknowledgements 7

1. Singwaya, slaves and clients: the Mijikenda and Mombasa to 1890. 9

2. 'Why the natives will not work': networks of labour, 1887-1917 82

3. 'Close contact with the coast residents is most prejudicial': government intervention and changing networks, 1908-26 143

4. 'Housing the floating population': planning Mombasa, 1895-1931 205

5. 'Those who went before': changing networks, 1925-34 245

6. 'The drums are used for other dances': the Mijikenda and the dance societies of Mombasa to c.1934 305

Conclusion 337

Appendix 341

Bibliography 362

Figures

i. Kenya coast: land heights 10

ii. Mijikenda kayas and approximate areas of Mijikenda groups 24

iii. Mombasa and the surrounding mainland 84

iv. Administrative boundaries to 1915 176

v. Administrative boundaries and Trade Centres, 1920 177

vi. Mombasa Island 206

Abbreviations

PC	Provincial Commissioner
CNC	Chief Native Commissioner
SNA	Secretary for Native Affairs
DC	District Commissioner
ADC	Assistant District Commissioner
SoS	Secretary of State for the Colonies
SCC	Senior Commissioner, Coast
PRO	Public Record Office
KNA	Kenya National Archives
Int	Interview conducted by this author (see Appendix)
MHT	Interview from the selection published by T Spear in Traditions of Origin and Their Interpretation Athens, Ohio, 1982
EAS	East African Standard, daily edition signified (D) weekly edition as (W)
JRAI	Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute
JAH	Journal of African History
JAS	Journal of the Africa Society
TNR	Tanganyika Notes and Records
IJAHS	International Journal of African Historical Studies

A note on colonial titles

Until 1907, the senior official in British East Africa was His Majesty's Commissioner. Beneath him, there was a Sub-commissioner in charge of each Province, and a Collector in charge of each district of the province. After 1907, the highest official was the Governor, under whom there was a Provincial Commissioner in each province, and a District Commissioner in charge of each district. On the coast there were also Assistant District Commissioners at Rabai and Takaungu, in Mombasa and Malindi Districts. In 1921 the Provincial Commissioners became Senior Commissioners, and the DC Mombasa became known as the Resident Commissioner. In 1927 they reverted to their previous titles.

Glossary

Thalatha Taifa	Three Tribes	who together make up
Tissia Taifa	Nine Tribes	the Twelve Tribes of the Mombasa Swahili
Kilifi/Wakilifi		the largest of the Nine Tribes, and members thereof
Kilindini/Wakilindini		the largest of the Three Tribes, and members thereof

buibui	Muslim woman's garment
serangi	leader of a work gang
tindal	leader of part of work gang
tembo	palm-wine
makuti	palm thatch
shamba	cultivated land
marinda	skirt worn by Mijikenda women
kambi	Mijikenda elder(s)
nyere	uninitiated Mijikenda men
kaya	sacred site of the Mijikenda

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been made possible by the help, kindness and patience of many people: so many, indeed that its completion seems more the result of a very fortunate and unlikely combination of circumstances than of my own work. It is impossible to name here all those whose generosity has allowed me to carry out my research and write it up, and I would like to express my humble gratitude to all those many whom I do not mention here. There are, however, some whose help and influence has been such that I must here express my thanks. At the School of Oriental and African Studies, I would like to thank Andrew Roberts, for much invaluable advice and patient reading of drafts; and Richard Gray for help and encouragement over the years. My particular thanks go to Roland Oliver for his support and advice.

My fieldwork in Kenya would have been impossible without the help of the University of Nairobi, and particularly of Ahmed Salim, Karim Janmohamed and Godfrey Muriuki. Equally invaluable in the assistance they provided were Mr Musembi and Nathan Mnjamaof the Kenya National Archives, and Abdurahman Mwinzagu of the National Museums of Kenya. I gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of the Office of the President, and of the many administative officers of Mombasa, Kilifi and Kwale districts who assisted me in my fieldwork. Fort Jesus Museum, the Municipality of Mombasa and the Mombasa Lands Registry were most generous in allowing me to use their records. I would also like to thank all the staff of the British Institute in Eastern Africa. Thanks also to Justus Mweni Mramba and Johnson Ruwa for their patient help.

Acknowledgements

While in Kenya, I was fortunate enough to meet and talk with a number of other researchers, whose friendship and enthusiasm kept me going. I would like to thank them all, particularly Bill Bravman, Mary Porter, Jeanne Bergman, and David Sperling. My thanks also go to Martin Walsh for his help and kindness.

The tolerance, kindness and love of my parents have supported me through this thesis, as through the rest of my life, and I thank them once again. Certainly, without them, this thesis would not have been possible. In Mombasa, the family of the late Shihabuddin Chiraghdin have shown me enormous kindness and hospitality over the years since I first went to Mombasa.

The research for and writing of this thesis was supported by a grant from the British Academy.

Most of all, I would like to thank all the people of Mombasa, Kilifi and Kwale Districts, for their patience, their generosity, and their willingness to discuss their history.

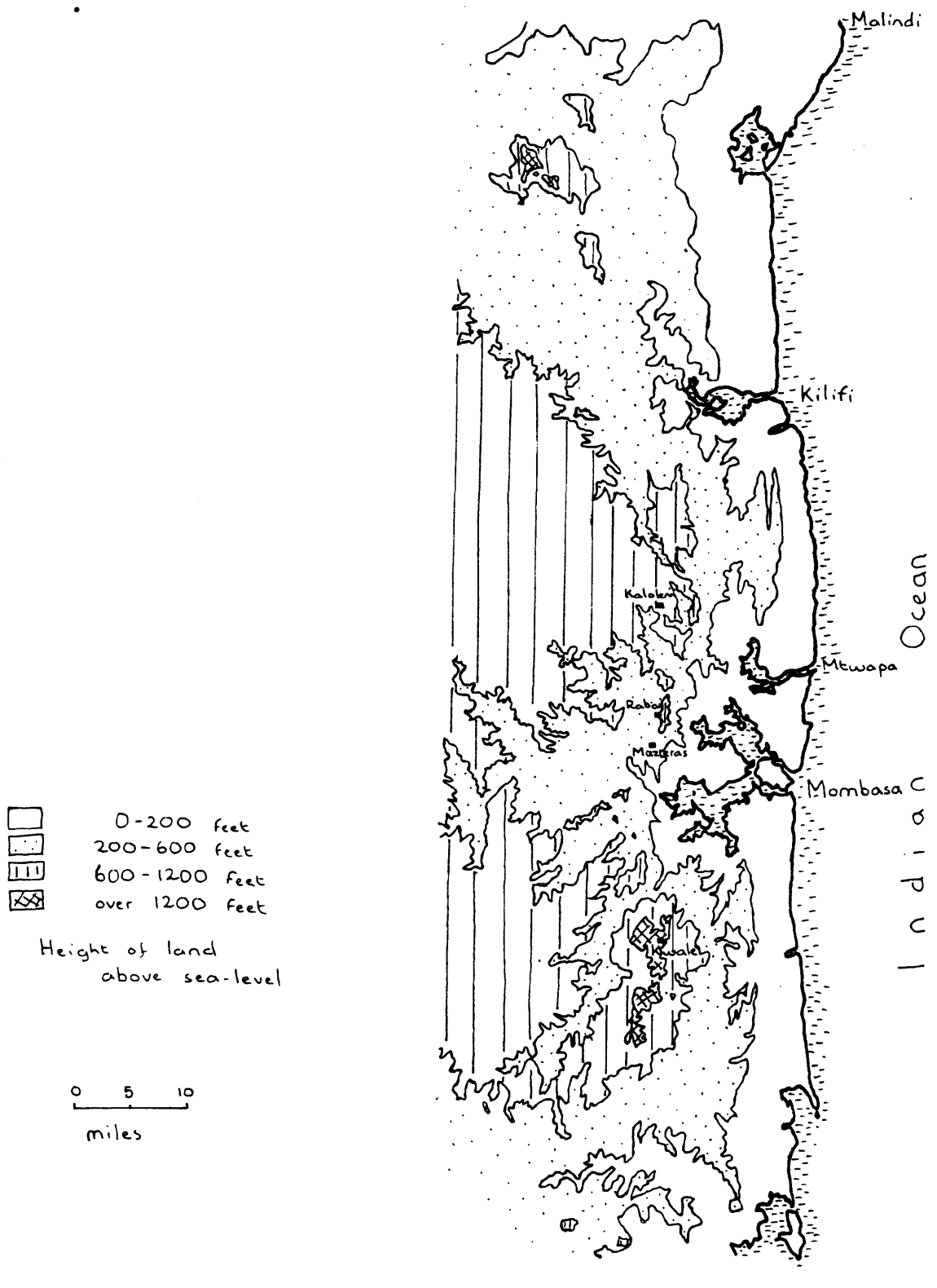
Chapter One

Singwaya, slaves and clients:

the Mijikenda and Mombasa to 1890

A few miles inland from the island of Mombasa, the land climbs steeply up in a ridge. It is a relatively fertile and well-watered area stretching from Kilifi in the north and continuing south of Mombasa as the Shimba hills. Further west the ridge gives way to drier and increasingly infertile scrubland. The island of Mombasa itself, like some of the immediately surrounding mainland, is not distinguished by its fertility. Coral lies just below the topsoil, and the ground holds little water. The hillocks and valleys that lie at the foot of the main ridge are richer. Here, annual crops such as maize, rice and millet flourish. In the past the top of the ridge was heavily forested, and now this land, and some of that immediately along the coast, is densely planted with fruit trees - coconut, mango, cashew, orange and others. While maize and other annuals can be, and usually are, planted among fruit trees, they do not do well. The long roots of coconut palms, in particular, provide too much competition for them. There is a certain complementarity to the agriculture of ridge, foothills and shoreline.

The rains come in two seasons, the short rains in October or November, and long rains in April and May. Crops of maize and, in the past, millet are planted for both seasons. Should the shorter rains fail, as often happens, there is no January harvest, and the long wait from August, the main harvest, to the long rains of the following year can cause general shortages. A poor crop or failure in the following August means famine.



Kenya Coast land heights

Moreover, the rains may affect the area very patchily, so that while the people of Kinung'una may have a good harvest, those of Kwale, 30 miles to the south, may face shortage(1). As a result, migrations of people within this area are common, as is the need to transport food grains around within it.

Diseases rule out the use of pack animals, and given this the potential of sea transport in moving bulk goods up and down the coast emphasises the possibilities of the coast and local hinterland as an economic whole. At Mombasa, Kilifi and Mtwapa, navigable creeks reach miles inland, as far as the foot of the ridge, and trade routes from the hinterland once made much use of these(2). The sea structures the economy of the area in another way. For centuries there have been trading contacts with the Middle East and India, bringing a demand for certain high value products - ivory, civet, rhino horn, orchilla weed and others - which could not be met solely by the inhabitants of the towns which developed along the seashore. While the two rains set the seasons for the farmers of the coast, the winds that carry them set the seasons for seaborne traffic. From October to January, a wind from the north brought sailing boats from the Gulf, from Aden, and from India. In April and May, another wind carries them north again, leaving the cultivators of the coast free to collect their August harvest(3).

Along the line of the East African coast itself lie a chain of towns, and the ruins of towns. These are and have been populated by a Muslim people all speaking

1. see eg PC - CNC, 8 Aug 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/2/105.
2. Int 40a, 21b.
3. see Mark Horton, 'Early Settlement on the Northern Kenya Coast', PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1984, for the winds and tides.

dialects of a language which is common to settlements along hundreds of miles of this coast. These people are generally known as the Swahili. Some of these towns were or are many acres in extent, with buildings of coral set in lime mortar, as well as of clay and timber(4). Mombasa is among these towns, and has existed for hundreds of years(5). Yet, while Arab and Portuguese geographers and colonists wrote of Mombasa, visited and conquered it(6), the ridge that lay only ten miles from the island remained a mystery to them, as did its inhabitants.

The population of Mombasa's local hinterland briefly appear in the records of these visitors, usually as the armed allies of one Mombasan faction or another, mutely waving their bows in the background of Mombasa's dramatic performance. The Portuguese gave them a name:

> The fortress of Mombasa is situated..on an island of the Cafres, who are called Mozungulos(7).

But their motives, their economy, their very identity, remain mysterious. Fickle in the extreme, the Mozungulos appear at one time fighting for the Mombasans against the Portuguese, at another supplying the beleaguered Portuguese garrison of Fort Jesus, and at yet another

4. ibid; also N Chittick, Kilwa, Nairobi 1974; J Kirkman, Men and Monuments on the East African Coast, London 1964.
5. H Sassoon, 'Excavations on the site of early Mombasa', Azania, XV, 1980, pp. 1-42.
6. see J Strandes, The Portuguese Period in East Africa, Nairobi, 1961; GSP Freeman-Grenville, Select Documents of the East African Coast, Oxford 1962; GSP Freeman-Grenville, Mombasa Martyrs of 1631, London, 1980, Preamble, p. 3.
7. J Gray, 'Rezende's Description of Mombasa in 1634', in Tanganyika Notes and Records, XXIII, 1947.

removing and selling to the Portuguese the head of a rebellious Sultan of Mombasa who had fled to them for protection(8). That they remained unknown clearly did not mean that they were powerless or irrelevant. In 1610, the Sultan of Mombasa was bankrupted by his obligation to entertain Mozungulo visitors, who seem to have made a point of outstaying their welcome(9). The Portuguese took over from the Sultan of Mombasa the burden of paying a yearly sum to pacify them, and maintained forts at the ford which leads to the island to discourage those not satisfied with this arrangement(10).

For historians, this apparent hostility and lack of contact has often been taken as the most extreme manifestation of a curious feature of the urban Islamic culture of the coastal towns - its failure to expand, to move inland, indeed to have any apparent impact on the continent to the edge of which it clung. Books on the history of East Africa have tended to treat the coast and the interior in separate chapters, and those chapters discussing the coast deal with the coastal towns, and the overseas trade, not with the people of the narrow hinterland strip that lies behind the towns(11); the 'half-savage Nyika' as two historians have put it(12). The oral and written traditions of some of the towns seem to emphasise this detachment, with their accounts of the magical separation of islands from the mainland, the identification of even the local hinterland with a degree

8. see Botelho, Decada, Chap XXVII (typescript in Fort Jesus Museum, Mombasa); and Strandes, Portuguese Period, pp.170, 217.
9. Bocarro, Decada 13 da Historia da India (typescript in Fort Jesus).
10. Strandes, The Portuguese Period, p.146.
11. see eg FJ Berg, pp.119-141, in Zamani; a survey of East African History, B. Ogot(ed), Nairobi, 1974.
12. CR Boxer and C Azevedo, Fort Jesus and the Portuguese in Mombasa, 1593-1729, London 1960, p. 43.

of outsideness and danger, their concentration on the superiority of urban, Muslim culture over the pagan culture of the world without the town walls(13).

But this hostility was ambiguous, the separation far from complete. The mainland around Mombasa was not entirely hostile or unknown to the townspeople in the seventeenth century, for the twelve 'Cafres' villages within it paid a yearly tribute of grain to the rulers of the town(14). Mombasa was at times reliant on food supplies from the hinterland(15), and the annual payment of cloth by the Sultan may have been intended to maintain a trading relationship with farmers as much as to buy off savage raiders. While the Sultan of Mombasa's attempt to seek refuge in 1614 was less than successful, later tales of Mombasa in the 18th century emphasise the role of the mainland as a refuge from the political struggles of the island(16). Even while some traditions of the coastal towns emphasise the distinct and superior nature of urban culture, others, long extant in Mombasa and other coastal towns, are more ambiguous. Fumo Liongo, a legendary hero of Swahili history, has been seen as the epitome of urban culture, a genteel poet and a prince of the towns whose poetry is still performed today(17). Yet he was also, in various stories, a hunter, a man of the wilds beyond the town(18), and thus a figure who while at

13. Freeman-Grenville, Select Documents.., p.37, p.222.
14. Gray, 'Rezende's Description..'
15. Bocarro, Decada 13 (Fort Jesus).
16. L Harries, 'Swahili Traditions of Mombasa', Afrika und Uebersee, XLIII, 2, 1959, pp.81-105; 'Mombasa Chronicle', in WFW Owen, Narrative of Voyages..., London, 1833, p. 418.
17. E Steere, Swahili Tales, London, 1870, p.; W Hichens, 'Liyongo the Spearlord', ms in SOAS , Ms 20500.
18. see eg the 'Bow Song', in L Harries, Swahili Poetry, Oxford 1962, p. 182; and J de V Allen, 'Traditional history and African literature: the Swahili case', JAH, XXIII 1982.

the centre of urban life is its theoretical antithesis. The land beyond the town is essential to the town.

Most ambiguous of all in this relationship of town and hinterland is the question of ethnicity, a subject of heated debate, intense conflict and negotiation that runs through the history of Mombasa and its local hinterland from the earliest references to the town until the present day. This debate still stirs intense emotion among the people of the coast and heated controversy amongst historians(19). For who were the people of Mombasa who, in the sixteenth century and later, displayed such apparent stand-offishnes in their relationships with the people of the mainland? Some were clearly of Middle Eastern origin, wholly or partly, for the sparse historical records and archaeological evidence show evidence of the presence of traders and settlers from the Middle East in the coastal towns from an early date(20). But the rest? In 1847 a French visitor to Mombasa, Guillain, was told that the Kilindini, the largest of the Twelve Tribes of the Mombasa Swahili, came from the mainland, where the remains of their settlements could still be seen, and had originally come from a place called Shungwaya to the north(21). Shungwaya, or Singwaya, is a name and an idea which winds its way through the history of the area, and developing ideas of ethnicity, its meaning metamorphosing dramatically over time.

19. see W Arens, 'The Waswahili: the social history of an ethnic group', in Africa, XLV,4,1975; also H Kindy, Life and politics in Mombasa, Nairobi 1972; and AI Salim, Swahili Speaking Peoples of the Kenya Coast, Nairobi 1973.
20. see notes 4 and 6.
21. Guillain, Documents sur l'histoire, la geographie et le commerce de l'Afrique Orientale, Paris, 1857, p. 240

There is no more recent historical cognate for the Portuguese term 'Mozungulos'. In the 18th century, a new word for the hinterland people became current. An Arabic history of Mombasa records that in 1728 a Mombasan delegation to seek the help of the Sultan of Oman in expelling the Portuguese was accompanied by representatives of the towns of Vanicat(22). Through the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, the hinterland population continued to be called Wanyika by others, and on occasion by each other. This term is itself laden with the implications of the distinction between town and hinterland already mentioned. Nyika is the scrubland beyond the ridge, connotes uncivilised life as against the life of the town, and is in a sense a definition of the hinterland peoples by what they are not rather than what they are. It is not a term expressing any perceived commonality between these people, and the Giriama and Digo, consigned to this category by outsiders, often rejected it(23). Moreover, while twentieth-century anthropologists have restricted its meaning to the nine tribes living near Mombasa, in the nineteenth century the term also embraced the populations in the hinterland of towns on the Tanzanian coast(24).

While there was in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries no term expressing their overall identity, there does seem to be a definite continuity between the groups who were living around Mombasa in the seventeenth century and those there today, for the Portuguese mention the Arabaja and the Chogni, now written as Rabai and

22. 'Mombasa Chronicle' in Owen, Narrative.., p. 418.
23. AHJ Prins, Coastal Tribes of the North-eastern Bantu, London, 1951, p. 35.
24. See Emery's 'Journal of the 1824-26 British Establishment in Mombasa', PRO ADM 52 3940.

Chonyi. But since the 1940s they now have a collective appellation. Now they are called the Mijikenda, the 'nine towns', and the nine constituent groups have been recorded and fixed by politicians, ethnographers and historians. These are the Giriama, the Digo, the Rabai, the Chonyi, the Jibana, the Ribe, the Kambe, the Kauma and the Duruma.

The historical traditions underlying this identity, this unity, have been extensively collected and analysed by Thomas Spear in two works(25). Today, the Mijikenda all share a common and in many ways remarkably consistent tradition of origin - that they come from Singwaya, a place in the north, whence they were driven by a war with the Galla, a pastoralist group who play the role of destructive villains in many historical traditions and written histories of East Africa. From Singwaya, the Mijikenda came south, some versions claiming that the nine sub-divisions were already established at this time and others that squabbles and partings along the way led to the modern divisions. Around Mombasa, they found refuge from the Galla in kayas, settlements in clearings within dense stands of forest,only entered by narrow pathways. These are described as ridge-top settlements, and there was one for each group, hence the name of the nine towns.

Spear supports his argument with historical linguistic evidence as to the closeness of the languages spoken by the different groups(26), and their similarity to the

25. T Spear, The Kaya Complex: the History of the Mijikenda Peoples to 1900, Nairobi 1978; idem, Traditions of Origin and Their Interpretation, Athens 1982.
26. Spear, 'Traditional methods and linguistic analysis: Singwaya revisited', History in Africa, IV, 1977, pp.249-264.

language of the Pokomo on the Tana. He suggests that the traditions are essentially true, that the migration, which he dates from the number of Mijikenda age-sets that have subsequently passed, took place in the seventeenth century, and that this common origin is both a charter for and an explanation of a set of institutions based around the kaya system of government, which broke down in the nineteenth century as more and more people moved out from the kaya. In this analysis, the durability of the stories is a mark both of their historical truth and of their role in maintaining the integrity of these institutions(27).

Yet this link is questionable. The association of the kayas with the migration from Singwaya, expressed in the stories by the presence in each kaya of a fingo, a sacred object brought from Singwaya, relies on the idea that each group left Singwaya as a distinct entity, with its own fingo: an idea which is not common to all the versions of the story and is in direct conflict with evidence that the Digo, for example, were not a single and distinct group even in the nineteenth century(28). Indeed, in the nineteenth century, when Spear argues that the kaya system was still functioning, observers never noted any link between the kayas and Singwaya, or indeed between the Mijikenda and Singwaya. It is curious that, in arguing the essential link between Singwaya and the kayas, Spear does not explain how it is that the Singwaya story has survived what he perceives as the breakdown of the institutions of the kaya. He goes so far as to argue

27. Spear, 'Traditional myths and historians' myths: variations on the Singwaya theme of Mijikenda origins', History in Africa, I, 1974, pp.67-84.
28. JL Krapf, Travels and Missionary Labours During an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa, London, 1860, p.159

that the stories allow the historian to reconstruct details of the institutions as they were in the nineteenth century(29). There is an evident conflict here: is the story a living charter or the plan of a derelict institution? In either case, it is remarkable that the Singwaya story of origins seems not to have been contemporaneous with the institutions to which Spear links it.

It seems more likely that the Mijikenda are of heterogeneous origins: Spear himself has begun to doubt the claims of the Rabai and Duruma to Singwaya origins, on the evidence both of traditions which suggest that they were not at Singwaya, and of cultural differences from other Mijikenda groups, notably the importance of the matriline(30). The linkage between Singwaya and the kayas, moreover, must be seen in the context of the constant renegotiation of power; of the role of the kayas as a part of the power of elder men, and the elders' control of history which allows them to legitimate their power through historical reconstruction.

There is a striking uniformity in the presence of Singwaya in traditions collected in this century - informants from many areas, from different clans, of different ages, all know that they came from Singwaya. In his analysis, Spear implicitly accepts the idea that such consistency is proof of historicity, that the consistent elements of tradition are historical truths around which a narrative is built(31). This idea of a consistent core of truth is common to almost all analyses of oral tradition and is accepted even by Henige, the most

29. Spear, 'Traditional myths and historians' myths', p.69.
30. Spear, Traditions of Origin.., Introduction.
31. see J Vansina, Oral Tradition, London, 1965.

sceptical of oral historians(32). Accepting that oral tradition is vulnerable to change and corruption, and that its uses are manifold, Spear and others nonetheless believe that the historical elements are separable from the rest, and are marked by their consistency.

This approach ignores the distinction made by Roberts between traditions of origin and family or clan histories(33); Spear is alive to the social functions of history, but assumes that all forms of oral history have a similar social role and so conflates them in analysis. In origin traditions, shared cliches cannot be seen as a factual core, for the social function of an origin tradition demands that it be built around such cliches(34). It is in the generality, the consistent elements that traditions of genesis are most vulnerable to change, for these cliches encapsulate their political meaning. In these circumstances, it seems curious to assume that the more traditions resemble one another, the more accurately historical they are. It might be more reasonable to assume that such remarkable consistency is a sign of a recently disseminated story. The particular interests of family or clan may produce unique elaborations and inventions which are shown to be ahistorical by their rare occurrence, but the making and remaking of ethnicity in the interests of larger groups may equally produce elaborations identified as ahistorical by their degree of consistency.

For it is through traditions of origin that ethnicity, a

32. D Henige, Oral Historiography, Harlow, 1982, p.76.
33. AD Roberts, A History of the Bemba, London, 1973, p.23
34. ibid.

major field of struggle over the last century, is seen to be defined(35). Identity, unity and opposition are expressed through origin. The Mijikenda are the Mijikenda because they come from Singwaya - a point Spear himself makes(36). Travel and communication within the Mijikenda area are relatively easy, and the dissemination and adoption of traditions presents no insurmountable problem; as Spear recognises by his acceptance that the Rabai and Duruma are not from Singwaya, though they claim to be. By paring down traditions to their minimal shared elements, Spear's analysis allows the construction of a shared history, built on the lowest common denominator of the traditions, but it ignores a diversity in the traditions which may tell us much about history. To argue this is not to suggest that origin traditions should be disregarded or that their consistent elements should be rooted out and disposed of, but that in identifying these common elements we should seek to understand them not as a record of events but within the context of their dissemination and their meaning in more recent times.

The neat link between the nine kayas, all similar, and the nine groups of the Mijikenda dwelling within them has become generally accepted as a potted presentation of the uniformity of the pre-colonial history of the Mijikenda(37). Yet it makes a unity of an actually diverse experience. There are and have been considerably

35. Henige, Oral Historiography, pp.90-91
36. Spear, Kenya's Past: An Introduction to Historical Method in Africa, Nairobi, 1981, pp.54-57.
37. see eg C Brantley, 'Gerontocratic Government', in Africa, XLVIII, 1978.

more than nine kayas(38), and by no means all of them are on the ridge. Kaya Fungo, the main Giriama kaya, is considerably to the west of it, and Guillain's description of the Duruma kaya Mtswakara puts it in a valley(39). While the name Mijikenda has fixed the number of constituent tribes at nine, and the list of nine has been recorded and fixed, the historicity of this cannot be assumed. Nineteenth-century sources give a number of other Nyika names; Shimba and Lughuh(40); Bombo, Malife, Mohane, Muzador, Mukuomame(41); Taaota, Wangoombe, Makhshingo, Mannamokee, Mackoolo, Amprengo(42). Some of these are recognisable as modern clan names within the Mijikenda, but clearly at this time the number nine had no significance, nor was the distinct unity of each of the current nine firmly established.

There still exists some confusion among the Mijikenda themselves as to who the nine tribes are. At the beginning of the century, officials often included the Taita and Segeju among the Nyika(43), and informants today may include the Pokomo and Segeju, sometimes the Taita, sometimes the Kamba, and may include some or all of these groups in the Mijikenda and in their traditions of migration from Singwaya(44). Since there have to be nine, these informants exclude some of the 'real' nine, the list made absolute by written ethnography and

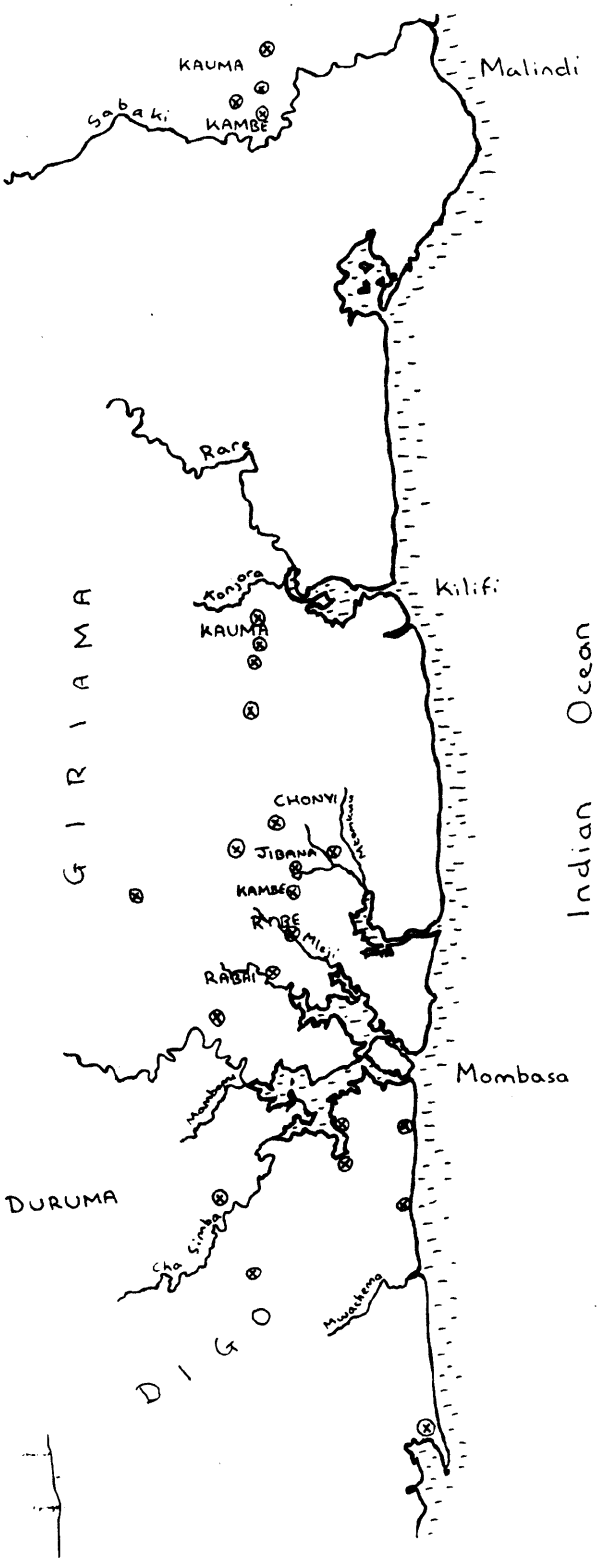
38. A Werner, 'The Bantu Coast Tribes of the East African Protectorate', in JRAI, XLV, 1915, pp.326-354; also H Mutoro, 'The Spatial distribution of the Mijikenda Kaya Settlements on the Hinterland Kenya Coast', Trans-African Journal of History, XIV, 1985, pp.78-100.
39. Guillain, Documents.., p.277.
40. Owen, Narrative of Voyages.., p. 418.
41. Emery's Journal, 15 October 1825.
42. L Krapf 'Voyage from Aden to Zanzibar', CMS CA 5 O 163.
43. 'Notes on the history of the Wanyika', Macdougall, 1914, KNA DC KFI 3/3.
44. MHT various

history. Historians may attempt to fix and limit the idea of the Mijikenda, but as an oral tradition it remains dynamic.

Variant details in traditions of the migration itself also raise questions. The Digo, for example, have a tradition of a northward migration(45), as do the Rumba clan of the Jibana(46). To accommodate the Singwaya story this is generally presented as a remigration. This seems remarkably similar to the way in which the nineteenth-century stories of Rabai origins in Rombo(47) has now been changed to incorporate a previous migration from Singwaya to Rombo(48). The inclusion of Singwaya in the Digo stories may be a similar emendation. The Digo, like the Duruma and the Rabai, were in the recent past matrilineal.

The Kambe, while they claim to have come from Singwaya, seem by general consensus of the other Mijikenda groups not to have done so(49). Jibana and Chonyi traditions focus much more on their subsequent movements around the hinterland of Mombasa, and their relationship with the island, than they do on the move from Singwaya(50). Some traditions claim that the Mijikenda were already nine groups when they left Singwaya(51), others that they left as one group(52). It is in these differences that a struggle for control over the tradition among the Mijikenda themselves becomes apparent, for through their

45. Int 5a.
46. MHT 8.
47. Krapf, Journal, p. 76, 11 Oct 1847 CMS CA 5 O 172; also L Harries, 'The Founding of Rabai: a Swahili chronicle', in Swahili, XXXI, 1961, pp.141-9.
48. MHT 43.
49. MHT 38, 65.
50. MHT 8,10, 12, 16, 21.
51. MHT 23; Werner, 'Bantu coast tribes..', p.328
52. MHT 1, 43, 71, 72.



MIJIKENDA KAYAS with approximate areas of different Mijikenda groups

presentation of the tradition, story-tellers seek to establish a hierarchy between the Mijikenda groups, to find precedents, to claim rights. Different groups claim to be in some way the father of other groups, by virtue of the order in which they left Singwaya(53), or by the order of birth of their ancestors(54). Most vividly, disputes over land use between Ribe, Kambe, Chonyi and Jibana find expression in stories of splits and conflicts on the journey from Singwaya, in competing claims to be the first arrivals from Singwaya in an area(55). The simmering conflict over land between the Kambe and their neighbours(56) finds expression through the story that the Kambe were not at Singwaya and their counter-claim that they were the only people there(57). Through the Singwaya story, claims to brotherhood through common origin are intertwined with claims to a place in a fixed hierarchy established by that common origin.

The story also operates to establish, to justify and to claim relationships with other non-Mijikenda groups. Some versions of the story present Singwaya as the cradleland not just of the Mijikenda, but of modern Kenya, or of all humanity(58). As a further example of the expansion of origin traditions, it might be noted that a fairly widespread version of the migration, collected from Digo, Jibana, and Giriama, gives Egypt and/or Mecca as a place of origin before Singwaya(59). Origin stories can function as a claim not only to unity among the Mijikenda, but to a unity with other groups, to

53. MHT 31, 38, 71, 72.
54. MHT 23; Werner, 'Bantu coast tribes..', p.328
55. MHT 45, 12, 38.
56. THR Cashmore, ' A note on the chronology of the Wanyika of the Kenya coast', TNR, LVII, 1961, pp.153-72.
57. MHT 63.
58. MHT 8; Int 40b.
59. MHT 21, 23.

membership of the Kenyan nation, of the Muslim community or to a general brotherhood of man. A desire to identify with, to be included, seeks expression through claims of common origin. The changing patterns of identity and ethnicity during the twentieth century revealed that the opposite is also true - that a rejection of common interests involves constructing a history of separate origins.

In this context, of the creation of origins and thus the creation of identity, Singwaya has proved to be a most versatile story, and has even acquired an archaeology of is own. The Bajun, who some consider to be a Swahili group, once inhabited the coast and islands north of Lamu, but have over the last two centuries become established along much of the coast to the south. In the 1890s, a traveller was told,

> The ruins I saw near Burkau were built by a Bajoni named Shingwaia and were the remains of a wall intended to resist the Galla attacks(60)

Since then, these ruins at Birgao, near the Somali border, have been pressed into service by others as the site of the Mijikenda Singwaya(61).

Spear's thesis suggests that the Mijikenda arrived in Mombasa's hinterland in the late sixteenth century, which ties it in with what little is known of the activities of

60. W. Fitzgerald, Travels in the coastlands of British East Africa, London, 1970, (first 1898), p. 465.
61. GSP Freeman Grenville, 'The Coast, 1498-1840', in History of East Africa, Volume 1, ed. G Mathew and R Oliver, Oxford 1963.

the Galla and with the first Portuguese references to the Mozungulos. Yet this dating is based on an attempt to produce a group of standard age-sets from evidence which is often conflicting(62). Moreover, the Portuguese records do not suggest that the 'Mossungulos' were new arrivals in the 16th century. They were, it seems, already in established alliances and adept in the use of bows - whereas tradition holds that the Mijikenda acquired bows in the final stages of their flight from Singwaya(63).

Most dramatically in contradiction to Spear's hypothesis stands the evidence that there is no record of the Singwaya tradition among any of the current Mijikenda peoples before 1900. Since there was no systematic collection of traditions before this time, this is not overwhelming proof that the story is recently adopted, but it is striking that none of the several origin stories mentioned in the nineteenth century refer to Singwaya. Challenging Spear's thesis, Morton(64) has argued that the existing Singwaya story, a Swahili myth of origin, was transferred to the Mijikenda by Arabs and Swahili of the coastal towns. This was done in an attempt to seek historical justification for their relationship with the Mijikenda, and particularly for the practice of pawning children in return for food, which the British had effectively banned. This version accounts admirably for the sudden emergence of Singwaya as an origin for the Mijikenda in coastal texts such as the

62. M.Walsh, 'Mijikenda Origins: a review of the evidence', unpublished MS 1987; MHT 13, 23, 29.
63. Walsh, 'Mijikenda Origins...'
64. F Morton, 'The Shungwaya myth of Mijikenda origins; a problem of late nineteenth century Kenya coastal historiography', IJAHS, V, 3, 1972, pp. 397-423; idem, 'New evidence regarding the Shungwaya myth of Mijikenda origins', IJAHS, X, 4, pp. 628-643

'Kitab al-Zanuj'. It is harder to see why the story should so swiftly have been adopted by the Mijikenda. As late as 1902, Johnstone's account made no mention of it, saying instead that the Kambe are from Taita, the Digo 'indigenous' and the Duruma descended from slaves of the Portuguese(65). By 1915, Werner noted that 'there seems to be a general consensus that the "Wanyika" come from Sungwaya'(66). Such a swift transformation, if Morton is right, would require some Mijikenda interest in the existing relationship.

As a claim to a common origin with the town-dwelling Swahili, the Singwaya story was in the early twentieth century an assertion of commonality, of an interdependence which, though riddled with inequalities, provided alternatives to the economic and social structures offered by colonialism. The Singwaya story was used by Mijikenda as well as by some Swahili and Arabs as a legitimation of an order which came increasingly under attack from the colonial government and was largely remade by 1930, though the incompleteness of this remaking produced a series of apparent contradictions, ambiguities in coastal society that have endured to this day. In the process of this remaking, a story that was originally an expression of a unified if rather unjust coastal economy came to be a story expressing the divide between different parts of the coast's population, between Arabs, Swahili and Mijikenda, a story of Arab exploitation of Africa, of the dispossession of the Mijikenda. This remaking of the

65. HB Johnstone, 'Notes on the customs of the tribes occupying Mombasa Sub-district, British East Africa', JRAI 32, 1902, p. 263.
66. Werner, 'Bantu coast tribes..', p. 327.

significance of Singwaya was a part of the creation of the Mijikenda as a group - no longer the Nyika, defined in relation to the town, but the Mijikenda, with an independent identity - though it was, ironically, an identity that found itself drawing heavily on the traditions of town groups.

To understand the way in which this history was remade, conflicts within Mijikenda society and the nature and control of history among the Mijikenda must be understood. The presentation of the dispersion from the kayas, already mentioned, demonstrates something of this. The standard view of this is that the period 1850-1900 saw a major dispersal of the Mijikenda from the kayas, which were their ritual centres and original centres of settlement(67). This process is, however, by no means simple - the process of dispersion from the kayas seems in several cases to have resulted in the founding of new kayas, among the Digo(68), and among the Giriama, the Duruma, the Kauma and Kambe. Expansion into new areas was not synonymous with the abandonment of kayas.

There is a further confusion with the idea of the dispersal of entire populations from the kayas. It has been argued that the area within each kaya clearing would have been adequate to take the homesteads of a couple of thousand people, that the entire population of each group - Giriama, Jibana, and so on, could once have lived within the kaya(69). But no kaya was ever seen with the entire group population within it. Indeed, eye-witness accounts almost always note that the population had been

67. Spear, The Kaya Complex, p. 49.
68. A Champion, The Agiryama of Kenya, London 1967, chapter 1; Werner 'Bantu coast tribes..', pp. 342-44; MHT 63, 68.
69. Spear, The Kaya Complex.., pp.6-9.

living in the kaya but had recently dispersed - whether these accounts be of the Rabai in the 1840s, the Kambe in the 1890s or the Giriama in the 1910s(70). While some of the people were, in each of these cases, inhabiting the kaya - a fairly large number in the case of the Kambe - many were not(71). Elderly informants today insist that their parents' generation lived within the kaya(72), a suggestion that would place the 'dispersion' rather later than Spear dates it, and which curiously echoes the accounts given to Champion in 1913(73) - by the very generation which these modern informants say did live in the kaya. The presentation of the population as being recently dispersed seems to be fixed over time: they have always dispersed recently.

A similar process occurs here, in Spear's history, to that which leads him to accept the Singwaya story. Stories collected from a number of elderly men assert that there was a dispersion from the kaya, and by paring these down, Spear produces a general pattern, which does not quite fit the evidence for any one group. Not only does this deny the variety of Mijikenda history, but by elevating the common elements to the status of truth it precludes discussion of them within the context of their formation. There is a clear link between the kaya and old men, and particularly the political power of old men. One informant told me simply that when men reached a

70. Krapf, 'Excursions to the country of the Wanika tribe of Rabbay', p.1, CMS CA 5 O 166; C. New, Life, Wanderings and Labours in Eastern Africa, Frank Cass 1971,(first 1877), p. 78; for the Giriama, see Champion, The Agiryama, pp.4-5 compared to Krapf, 'Excursion to the Wanika division of Keriama', p.13, Feb 1845 CMS CA 5 O 166.
71. New, Life, Wanderings, and Labours, p. 78; Werner, 'Bantu coast tribes..', pp. 341-4.
72. Int 42a, 8b.
73. Champion, The Agiryama.., pp.4-5.

certain age they could move into the kaya(74). Knowledge and care of the kayas is still in the hands of old men now, and one informant explicitly characterised the kaya as a source of power for him, by describing how he had at one stage built a considerable reputation as a preacher within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. On being expelled from the church for polygamy he became one of the elders of the kaya at Rabai: 'Now I've taken myself into being a kaya elder, and well, I get more knowledge, I get more knowledge'(75).

Brantley has called Mijikenda society in the nineteenth century a 'gerontocracy'(76). There was no formal central power, but law was administered through the judgement of men who had reached a particular point in the age-grade system. There also existed a number of secret societies, each with its own oath, the membership of which was drawn from men able to pay fees, usually of palm-wine, chickens and livestock. These were able to cast and remove spells and to administer oaths in cases where the judgement of a case was contested. The power and the membership of these overlapped with that of the age-grades, the members of the most powerful society, vaya, all being from the kambi, the top three sections of the ruling age-grade.

These societies meant that property and wealth could bestow additional political power, but essentially age was the key to power for males. Moreover, since the head of the homestead, which was virilocal and consisted of several generations, was the effective economic manager of the homestead, wealth and age tended to increase together. Judgement of disputes, the fixing and exaction of penalties, was in the hands of older men. Through

75. Int 56a, p.11.
76. Brantley, 'Gerontocratic Government..'

their knowledge of ritual, centred in the kaya, older men also controlled the rain. The magical objects of the kaya, the fingo, or charm, which protected it, and the mwanza, the friction drum used in kaya ceremonies, could only be seen and used by elder males(77). Rituals for rain, against sickness and against ill-luck all involved intercessions to the spirits of ancestors by the elders. Such intercessions required the elders to exact from everyone else meat, grain, palm wine, and cloth to be consumed and worn at the ritual(78). Arbitration of disputes and judgement of cases allowed the elders to charge fees(79), in kind or money, which they kept. They could also exact fines from those who saw the mwanza, or those who wished to know its secrets(80). This system continually redistributed wealth, if not in a very equitable fashion, channelling it towards the elders. It did not, however, allow a great accumulation of wealth by the elders, for the goods exacted were usually for immediate consumption. Those elders who did accumulate wealth found themselves subject to exactions from other elders(81). The elders no doubt had some very enjoyable parties, but few accumulated any considerable wealth. They were, though, generally able to ensure that everyone else accumulated even less.

In this context, there is a historical problem in dealing with the presentation of a population dwelling in

77. Krapf, Journal, 4 Feb 1847, p.17, CMS CA 5 0 171. For reconstructions of the nature of the gerontocracy, see Brantley, 'Gerontocratic Government..'; Werner, 'Bantu coast tribes..'; Champion, The Agiryama.
78. Krapf, Journal, p.28, 16 April 1847, CMS CA 5 0 171.
79. Krapf, Journal, pp. 82-83, 11 November 1847, CMS CA 5 0 172.
80. Krapf, Journal, p.17, 4 February 1847, CMS CA 5 0 171.
81. Krapf, Journal, p.209, 25 Dec 1848, CMS CA 5 0 172.

the kaya and ruled by old men. To see this as the shape of Mijikenda society until the mid-nineteenth century is to take an overly static view of Mijikenda society, particularly since the records that we have of these institutions are not eyewitness accounts of their functioning as perfected systems. All the ethnographies from which these descriptions are drawn tell us of the decline in the power of the elders, the breakdown of the system of age-grades(82). The elders did wield considerable power but they consistently presented the history of their culture in ways intended to suggest that they once had more. These accounts of what Mijikenda society was are equally statements of what informants feel that it should be, they are a part of a process of negotiation over the nature of power within society. Where the informants were talking to colonial officials anxious to strengthen and govern through a 'traditional' system, such information was a particularly strong weapon in this negotiation(83). For all our information on it is supplied and structured by old men, whose stories centre on their power, and on the kaya as a symbol of it. Their power resided in the kaya, and still to an extent does, and so they presented, and still present, a history where that power was absolute and all lived in the kaya. The Singwaya story, an origin tradition which structures relationships with other groups, has been drawn into the history of the kayas as a further legitimation of that history.

This control over history persists. In my own interviews I constantly found myself being directed to

82. see e.g. Champion, The Agiryama.., p.1.
83. see for example the debate over the institutions of the Duruma, in p.67 of the Political Record Book, KNA DC KWL 3/5, and Lambert, ADC Rabai - PC, 5 Oct 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/9/52.

old men who were associated with the kaya for the answers to any historical question - even though most of my work in fact had nothing to do with the kaya. This problem affected Spear's and Brantley's work and that of the tradition collectors of the colonial period, and it is a problem that grows from historians' preconceptions about oral history as well as from the attempts of elders to control knowledge and power within Mijkenda society. Too often it is assumed that the old have a clearer knowledge of the past (a past far too distant for them to have personal recollections), whereas what they actually have is more access to a historical knowledge that has been structured by other elders. This structuring has affected not only the traditions of origin, but those concerning the nature of society following the migration from Singwaya. Even the work of social anthropologists has been affected by this image of the shape of a static Mijikenda society with an established and accepted order in the early nineteenth century, as a pattern against which later events are seen as deviations(84). Researchers themselves acknowledge the precedence given to the kaya in the construction of history by their approving references to their informants' links with the kaya(85). There is a circularity to this - the testimony of these men is valid because they hold a position within the kaya, and the legitimation which the kaya gives to history is underlined by their testimony, which presents the kaya as the central institution of Mijikenda society.

This is not to argue that the kayas were not important, nor to assert that no-one ever lived within them. Rather,

84. see eg D Parkin, 'Medicines and Men of Influence', in Man, NS, III, 1968, pp.424-439.
85. Werner, 'Bantu coast tribes..', pp.320-332; also see Spear, Traditions of origin...

it seems that the presentation of the kaya should be seen as part of a historical and continuing generational conflict within Mijikenda society, that claims that all once lived within it are inseparable from the claims of elders about the proper extent of their power and the basis of that power. Krapf's description of Rabai in the 1840s, a time when the dispersion from the kayas as presented in the standard version had not really begun, makes it clear that not everyone lived within the kaya(86). Moreover, the power of the elders was not undisputed. The young men of Rabai acknowledged the power of older men by singing "We are yet young men, but we shall be elders"(87). But not all were willing to wait.

During the nineteenth century,the challenge to the power of Mijikenda elders fell into two categories, one being the construction of alternative sources of power not drawing on the kaya. Less subtly, people could run away. Figures on the numbers of runaways from Mijikenda homesteads living at Rabai mission in the 1880s suggest that flight from the authority of elders was a not uncommon occurence(88). Flight to another Mijikenda homestead, and a consequent change of identity, for example from Jibana to Giriama, was also possible(89). Those who remained were more creative in their resistance. Krapf records the presence of a women's friction drum in Rabai in the 1840s(90), which was used by women to exact fees from outsiders who inadvertently

86. Krapf, see note 60; and Krapf, Journal, p. 210, 27 Dec 1848, CMS CA 5 0 172.
87. Krapf, 'Excursion to Rabbai Empia', p. 9, April 1846, CMS CA 5 0 170.
88. 246 out of the 943 at Rabai, Mackenzie - Euan-Smith, 15 Nov 1888, IBEA 1a.
89. Int 41a; Krapf, Journal, p.213, 29 Dec 1848, CMS CA 5 0 172
90. Krapf, Journal, p. 51, 11 July 1847, CMS CA 5 0 172; also p. 209, 29 Dec 1848, CMS CA 5 0 172.

saw it. He also mentions the delicate relationship between the kaya elders and the 'dreaming woman', who was periodically possessed and became a medium for messages from the ancestors(91). Much has been written concerning spirit possession among Mijikenda women, and how it is and was used to extract material goods from ungenerous men(92). Such possession is not dealt with by kambi elders, nor is knowledge of it derived from the mysteries of the kaya. Women possessed by spirits might, as did the dreaming woman, make a tactical alliance with the kaya elders, but their possession, and the knowledge required to deal with it, did not derive from the kaya.

That the power of elders was not complete or unchallenged can also be seen through the disputes over rain magic. In an area where the failure of the rain meant famine, control over the rain was a highly valued skill. It was a source of ritual power for kaya elders, as it was their duty to organise ceremonies should the rain fail(93). But they also faced physical attack and accusations of witchcraft for 'stopping up' the rain. Such accusations could result in murder. In 1912, in Chonyi, young men countered what they saw as rain witchcraft by older men with simple violence, killing and the destruction of property. One elder helped and encouraged the young men, fired by personal animosity, but this does not disguise the active generational conflict that lay beneath the violence(94).

91. Krapf, Journal, pp.39-40, 11 May 1847, CMS CA 5 O 171; also p.96, 10 Jan 1848, CMS CA 5 O 172.
92. Krapf, 'Excursions to Dshombo...', 26 March 1845, pp.27-28, CMS CA 5 O 167; also R Gomm, 'Bargaining from weakness; spirit possession in the south Kenya coast', in Man, NS X,4, 1975, pp.530-43.
93. Krapf, Journal, p.198, 8 Dec 1848, CMS CA 5 O 172.
94. PC Coast - DC Malindi, 22 May 1915, KNA PC Coast 1/10/53.

A few years earlier a British official had noted a similar challenge to elders' power:

> When rain fails, the Nyere [uninitiated men] maintain that the Wakambi [initiated elders] have stopped it....The Nyere go to a leading muganga who sniffs at some medicine and wanders about until he arrives at a place where he says that the 'pot with the mischief in it' is buried or hidden....At other times the Nyere make for several Wakambi, tie them up and roast them before a fire until they say where they have buried the 'pot'. When the Nyere are about this quest, the Wakambi bury pots, in case they may be seized and nothing saves them from the fire except showing where the 'pot' is."(95)

This vulnerability to physical coercion was not the mark of a recent decline in the power of elders. In 1848 Krapf had witnessed an almost identical confrontation(96). Mijikenda government may have been a gerontocracy, but it was never unchallenged.

The later nineteenth century, then, saw not the steady breakdown of an established order, but the continuation of a dispute over what that order should be. The unity and common origins of the Mijikenda were not established, and their institutions were not uniform or fixed. The expansion of trade(97), the growth in the wealth and

95. 'Native laws and customs of the Takaungu Sub-district; Wanyika, Wagiriama and smaller tribes', Murray, 1898, p.3, KNA PC Coast 1/1/138.
96. Krapf, Journal, p. 210, 27 Dec 1848, CMS CA 5 O 172.
97. Spear, The Kaya Complex.., Chap 6.

population of Mombasa(98) and the establishment of mission and runaway slave settlements(99) may have exacerbated disputes within society, but the idea that Mijikenda society was at the beginning of the nineteenth century in a sort of ideal state from which all later history was a general decline cannot be accepted. By denying the historicity of conflict within the society it discounts a major influence on the history which I am attempting to understand, the history of contacts between Mijikenda groups and Mombasa.

The first nineteenth-century documents which tell us something of this relationship are those associated with the British establishment at Mombasa during the two years of the protectorate in 1824-26. The daily log of events kept by Lieutenant Emery, the young commander of this tiny establishment, is the most important of these(100).

This is in many ways a frustrating account. Emery recorded daily details of the weather, and a rich fund of detail on the savagery of naval discipline in isolated stations and the crude nature of medical knowledge of tropical diseases at the time. But his political and social dealings were exclusively limited to the Mazrui clan of Omani Arabs, who had an uneasy control of such government as there was. Information on the mainland beyond Mombasa is largely drawn from them, for Emery showed a marked unwillingness to move beyond the island, mindful perhaps of his predecessor's untimely demise on

98. FJ Berg, 'Mombasa under the Busaidi Sultanate' PhD thesis, Wisconsin 1971
99. F Morton, 'Slaves, Freedmen and Fugitives on the Kenya Coast, 1873-1907' PhD thesis, Syracuse 1976.
100. Contained in PRO ADM 52 3940.

such a journey(101).

The Mombasa described by Emery was a small town, with the Mazrui settled near to the Fort and the 'Sohilli' a little way away(102). The island itself was not heavily cultivated, and neither was the mainland around Mtwapa creek(103), to the north, where later in the century a large settlement and considerable slave-cultivated fields were established. But the townspeople did cultivate on the mainland, to the extent that Mombasa's population varied markedly with the seasons, there being at times very few people on the island(104). Slaves there were, for a number were given to Emery as soldiers by the Mazrui, and Emery wrote much of the difficulty of disciplining them(105). A few of these slaves were imported by sea from the south, a practice which Emery brought to at least a temporary halt against rather half-hearted protestations(106). Slaves, and the problem of disciplining them, gave Emery his most intensive contacts with the 'Whaneka', as he called the people of the hinterland. For it was they who captured and returned to Emery, and other inhabitants of the island, the slaves who fled from them. For this service they were paid in cloth, and sometimes in grain(107).

101. JM Gray, The British in Mombasa, 1824-26, London 1957, pp.64-66.
102. Emery, 'Short account of Mombasa and the Neighbouring coast of Africa', in Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, III, 1833, pp.280-283; also Owen, Narrative of Voyages.., p.423.
103. Emery, Journal, 15 Oct 1824.
104. Emery, Journal, entries for 21 May 1826, 6 June 1826, 22 Sept 1824.
105. See for example, Emery, Journal, 12 Feb 1825.
106. Emery, Journal, 8 Nov 1824 and 29 Aug 1924.
107. Emery, Journal, 3 Nov 1824, 17 Dec 1824, 8 March 1825.

The Whaneka made other appearances. Often, the log notes that there were Whaneka in the town without any particular reason for their presence being offered(108). At other times they had come with ivory or other goods, the ivory being supplied originally by the Kamba(109). They brought other goods too; gum copal(110) and calumba root(111). Their visits with trade goods were markedly seasonal, occuring in October to May, the time when the overseas trade was active. But in August and September, when the harbour was empty, they came to town without ivory or gum. Captain Owen, who established the Protectorate, thought the major interest of the Whaneka in trading was to secure palm wine.

> In their transactions with the Arabs, as soon as they have exchanged their articles they attack the toddy, until they become most brutally intoxicated(112).

But the Whaneka had another interest, as Emery noted in September 1824:

> The Whaneka are daily coming into town. I suppose they come for grain as it is near harvest(113).

Mombasa's role as an entrepot port in the Indian Ocean economy has attracted a great deal of historical

107. Emery, Journal, 3 Nov 1824, 17 Dec 1824, 8 March 1825.
108. Emery, Journal, 2 Sept 1824, 8 Sept 1824, 13 Oct 1824.
109. Emery, Journal, 6 July 1826.
110. Emery, Journal, 21 Nov 1825..
111. Emery, Journal, 21 nov 1825, 4 Dec 1825, 10 Dec 1825.
112. Owen, Narrative of Voyages.., Vol II, p. 187.
113. Emery, Journal, 3 Sept 1824.

attention - perhaps a natural corollary of the perception of its separation from the mainland. Yet the importance of this role might be questioned. Ships did call at Mombasa from India and the Gulf, with salt and dried fish, cloth, earthenware, iron and brass(114), taking away ivory and foodstuffs. But the trade was not flourishing. Some ships called and then sailed off, finding no market for their goods(115), and for many Mombasa was just one of a number of stops(116). Even Emery, seeking to convert cloth into ivory, organised expeditions to other coastal ports, so depressed was the market in Mombasa(117), and the Establishment's takings of customs were small(118).

This was not a result of the blockade of Mombasa imposed by the Busaidi Sultan of Oman, for this had been lifted at the start of the Protectorate. Two hundred years before, in the period of Portuguese rule, Mombasa had not been a paying proposition as a colony. Rezende noted that "Owing to the trade and population of Mombasa there will be a deficit"(119). When Guillain visited Mombasa, 20 years after Emery left, with the Busaidi in control, he records that most trade goods were scarcer and more expensive in Mombasa than elsewhere on the coast, with the exception of food grains(120). Mombasa did not owe its existence to the international trade in luxuries. Rather, as Rezende recorded in 1634:

> There are large supplies of corn, rice and

114. Emery, Journal, 6 Dec 1825, 21 Dec 1825.
115. Emery, Journal, 20 Oct 1824.
116. Emery, Journal, 7 Nov 1824, 26 Feb 1826.
117. Emery, journal, 28 Feb 1825.
118. Boxer and Azevedo, Fort Jesus and the Portuguese, Appendix f.
119. Gray, 'Rezende's Description..', p.11.
120. Guillain, Documents.., pp.300-337.

> cows. This is one of the reasons why this port is of vital importance to the rulers of the coast(121).

This importance was due not to the resources of Mombasa itself, which were minimal, but to Mombasa's position in a local coasting trade, drawing on the resources of its own hinterland and other parts of the coast. In Emery's time, most of the boats that entered and left Mombasa were bound to and from the local coast, Pemba, the Tanzanian coast or the Lamu archipelago, and they were loaded with grain, coconuts, or occasionally livestock. During the years of the Protectorate, far more vessels arrived bringing these cargoes than left with them, according to Emery's log(122). There was a natural tendency to evade Emery's attention on the part of ship-owners, who did not welcome the opportunity to pay customs, but this cannot explain the discrepancy between imports and exports of grain. At the Sultan's insistence, Emery had agreed not to charge export duties when grain brought into Mombasa from the northern mainland was re-exported(123). Some of the discrepancy is also explicable through Mombasa's role as a bulking centre, where goods arrived on small vessels and left on large ones, but the difference in vessel sizes was not that great. Mombasa was, it seems, importing far more grain than it was exporting by sea.

Mombasa's population may have eaten some of this grain, but it seems unlikely they would have consumed so much. Some of it must have been traded inland. Later in the century, Krapf noted the importance of Mombasa as a

121. Gray, 'Rezende's description..', pp.15-16.
122. 107 vessels arriving, as against 31 leaving, in the period September 1824 to July 1826.
123. Emery, Journal, 29 Sept 1824.

famine reserve for the hinterland(124). The Mijikenda saved little of their harvest(125) and in time of famine, if they had no ivory or gum, the 'Wanika' (as Krapf called them), fell back on their other tradable item:

> The Mombassians who had food in store provided them with such , but required them to give up their children who were forthwith sold to Arabia(126).

Krapf lamented this process as slavery, and there were frequent references to it as such during the nineteenth century(127). There is little actual evidence of children being sent to Arabia, however, and the history of the Mazrui clan refers to the practice in more favourable terms, describing events some time around 1820.

> In the liwaliship [governorship] of this Abdallah bin Hemed [c.1814-23] a very bad famine hit Duruma country..crowds of them left their country for Mombasa seeking food...the liwali had pity on them and provided them with rations and sent many Duruma families to Pemba(128).

Our appreciation of Abdallah's philanthropy may be a little diminished by the knowledge that the Mazrui maintained numbers of slave cultivators on the island of Pemba, and by the awareness that this history of the Mazrui was written in the twentieth century by a

126. Krapf, 'Excursions to Dshombo...', 24 March 1845, p.14, CMS CA 5 O 167.
127. New, Life, wanderings and labour, p.128
128. Al-Amin Mazrui, 'History of the Mazrui Clan', ms in Fort Jesus Museum Library, Mombasa, p. 43.

Mazrui anxious to demonstrate the benign dominance of Arab power in the nineteenth century, but clearly Krapf's urge to vilify the 'senseless Muhammedan master'(129) shaped his perception of this practice.

Krapf's suggestion, taken up by Spear, was that the process of lending food in time of famine was transformed by the Busaidi, who took control of Mombasa in 1837 - that it was they who used it to enslave children(130). The reality may have been more complex. The Busaidi could not simply have changed the relationship, for it was not a relationship between governments. Krapf's own testimony makes clear that it was made up of a series of arrangements between Mijikenda homesteads and wealthy men (and women) in Mombasa(131). Within Mijikenda societies, dependants could be transferred from one homestead to another in payment of debt. In 1898, an official noted that in Mijikenda society dependants were also transferred as compensation for crimes, as a form of blood-money;

> The persons handed over appear to occupy a somewhat menial position, but being essentially strengtheners of the family are not regarded as slaves..Boys handed over in the above manner among the Wa-Digo are on coming of age permitted to return home, but not so the girls(132).

In the same way, dependants could be transferred to the

129. Krapf, 'Excursions to Dshombo...', 24 March 1845, p.14, CMS CA 5 O 167.
130. Krapf, Journal, p.127, 3 May 1848, CMS CA 5 O 172; Spear, The Kaya Complex, p.100.
131. Krapf, Journal, p.155, 3 Sept 1848, CMS CA 5 O 172.
132. 'Laws of Kenya', 1898, Vol 1 p.98, KNA DC KFI 3/3.

households of Mombasans;

> During the great famine she [a Swahili woman] had provided an Mnika mother and her child with 20 pishis or measures of Turkish corn, then to the value of 4 or 5 dollars. In consequence of this act she considered the persons she had maintained to be her slaves(133).

One informant used the term kore, 'blood-money', of children given to Mombasans in this way, underlining the similarity of this kind of movement to that between Mijikenda homesteads(134). The terms of such transfers were not fixed. What Krapf saw as a transformation wrought by the Busaidi was a possibility always present in this relationship, the terms of which may well have varied from one individual to the next. The creditor might demand not just a period of labour by the dependants, but also repayment of the food advanced before they were returned(135). Some of those sent to Mombasa converted to Islam there, under the tutelage of their patron, becoming a part of the household. Some did not wait to be given by others, but themselves sought new patrons through conversion(136).

Perceptions of these processes have been affected by the implications of the term slavery. Spear has argued that essentially the Mijikenda held no slaves, for servile labour was incorporated into the household(137). The implied difference between this and the servile labour of

133. Krapf, Journal, p.18, 8 Feb 1847, CMS CA 5 0 171.
134. Int 60a.
135. Krapf, Journal, p.155, 3 Sept 1848, CMS CA 5 0 172.
136. Krapf, Journal, p. 38, 11 May 1847, CMS CA 5 0 171.
137. Spear, The Kaya Complex.., pp.98-99.

Mombasa is made specific by Morton in his discussion of incorporability(138). Slaves in Mombasan society, even when manumitted, were unable ever to escape the social implications of their servile status, and neither they nor their children could ever attain the status of the free-born. This placed them in direct contrast to servile labourers in Mijikenda groups. Thus, while the Mijikenda clearly did buy, sell and kidnap people for their labour power, they were not slaves, and the processes by which people went to Mombasa were different to those by which they were exchanged within Mijikenda groups. This argument, based though it is on the expressed tenets of Mombasan culture, ignores the extent to which Mijikenda, if not slaves from other origins, were able to establish themselves within Mombasa as members of higher-status groups, notably the Three Tribes of the Swahili(139). There was a degree of incorporability in Mombasa, as well as among the Mijikenda, which makes questionable the distinction drawn between slavery on the one hand and incorporation on the other.

The nineteenth-century trade between Mombasa and its local hinterland was complex. In the same month that Emery reported Mijikenda coming to town to buy grain, Mombasan merchants were receiving boatloads of grain from the north mainland(140), and exporting grain by sea to ports as distant as Sihhout in Arabia and Bombay(141). Shortly thereafter, grain was arriving in Mombasa by sea from Pemba(142). Nor was the demand for food from the hinterland constant. At times, Emery noted that the

138. Morton, 'Slaves and freedmen..', p.90.
139. see eg Int 9d, 5d.
140. Emery, Journal, 28 September 1824, also 30 September, 2 October, 5 October and 6 November 1824.
141. Emery, Journal, 6 October 1824, 9 October 1824.
142. Emery, Journal, 17 November 1824, 26 November 1824.

Mijikenda were bringing in foodstuffs(143), and in the 1840s Mombasa was exporting grain grown by the Mijikenda(144). At other times, a more general failure of rains, as in 1837, 1884-5, and 1898-9, produced famine through the whole area, and through Mombasa food could be imported from Pemba or the Tanzanian coast. Mombasa's significance in all this was not as a producer of foodstuffs but as a distributor. Accessible by sea and at the head of creeks that reached several miles inland to north and south(145), the island was a natural clearing house for redistributing grain.

Economically, Mombasa did not in 1825 exist solely as an entrepot port in the Indian Ocean economy, isolated from its hinterland. Nor was it a 'city state'(146), dominating a subject mainland. Following the expulsion of the Portuguese in 1729, the Mazrui family had been installed as Governors by the Sultan of Oman. The Mazrui had since achieved effective independence from Oman. However, though they occupied the imposing fort that dominates the harbour entrance, the power of the Mazrui was far from absolute.

Emery received little assistance from the Mazrui Governor in his constant attempts to impose his will on the people of Mombasa. While Emery viewed this as obstructionism, it reflected a very real lack of power(147). When the Governor succeeded in displeasing several different factions, he was quickly replaced by

143. Emery, Journal, 3 Nov 1824.
144. Guillain, Documents.., p.265.
145. ibid, p.229
146. J de V Allen, 'Witu, Swahili History and the Historians' in AI Salim(ed), State Formation in Eastern Africa, London/Nairobi 1986
147. Emery, Journal, 2 August 1825.

more congenial member of the family(148). The Governor's power was circumscribed, and he governed indirectly, through the heads of the clans and great families of Mombasa, whose consent and cooperation were constantly sought(149). Mombasa was an agglomeration of self-governing clans, held loosely together by the diplomacy and arbitration of the Governor, rather than a state. Emery even refers to the Governor simply as 'Head of the Arabs' at one stage(150).

The heads of the Swahili and Arab clans of the town were not the only other powerful figures. Emery refers to Whaneka 'chiefs', as does Krapf twenty years later(151). There is no such institution among the Mijikenda, no individual with executive power. There were, though, Mijikenda who benefited from a relationship with Mombasa, and who exerted some influence among the Mijikenda as a result of the wealth which this relationship brought them. These 'chiefs' were called to Mombasa for events such as the installation of the new Governor(152), and while in Mombasa they were entertained by, and received gifts from, the Governor and other prominent men(153). The Mazrui Governor was, like the Portuguese two centuries before, paying an annual sum to the people of the hinterland(154).

While the Mazrui sometimes acted as arbiters to settle

148. Emery, Journal, 5 Oct 1825.
149. Emery, Journal, 3 July 1825, 2 Aug 1825; Owen, pp.408-9
150. Emery, Journal, 5 Oct 1825.
151. Emery, Journal, 5 Aug 1825; JL Krapf, Travels and Missionary Labours During an Eighteen Years residence in East Africa, London, 1860, p.171.
152. Emery, Journal, 14 Oct 1825.
153. Krapf, 'Excursions to Dshombo..', p.25, 25 March 1845, CMS CA 5 0 167; Emery, Journal, 21 Feb 1826.
154. Emery, Journal, 25 Feb 1825.

disputes between Mijikenda groups in the 1820s, they were not rulers(155). They lacked the physical force to rule, having very little in the way of a standing army. In time of trouble, they relied on the numerous clients of individual members of the Mazrui family, and on the family itself, which was fairly large. In a serious military confrontation, as when they went to war with the Busaidi in Pemba, they called on the Mijikenda as allies(156). Nor was mediation only by Mombasans for Mijikenda; the Swahili of Jomvu turned to the elders of Rabai for help in settling a dispute(157).

Such relationships gave Mombasan merchants trading partners among the Mijikenda, with whom they could exchange cloth and other goods for ivory, gum copal, foodstuffs, and the right to cut timber. It also offered these merchants protection; safety for themselves and their property(158).

The wealthy men of Mombasa were rendered another service by the Mijikenda elders. They could rely on a supply of dependants traded by these elders in times of hardship, and, as Krapf saw, on the cooperation of the elders in returning dependants who, having been given to Mombasans, fled back to the hinterland(159). Emery too noted that the Mijikenda caught and returned many runaways from Mombasa, for a price(160). In return, the elders received gifts, access to trade goods, and food in times of famine. The support this gave to the gerontocracy is expressed in the stories of the gates of

155. Emery, Journal, 3-6 Aug 1825.
156. Emery, Journal, 9 Oct 1824.
157. Krapf, Journal, p.4, 6 October 1847, CMS CA 5 O 172.
158. Krapf, 'Excursions to Dshombo..', pp. 24-25, 25 March 1845, CMS CA 5 O 167.
159. Krapf, Journal, 8 Feb 1847, CMS CA 5 O 171.
160. Emery, Journal, 17 Dec 1824.

the kayas, said to have been given by the Swahili or Mazrui(161). In the Duruma version of this story, the gates were paid for with freeborn children(162). Other parts of the ritual regalia of the elders also came from Mombasa(163). The elders also sought to incorporate Islam into their rituals, having Muslims slaughter the animals which they exacted from the populace as offerings for ritual purposes, thus seeking to counterbalance the ritual power lent to some of the alternative institutions, such as spirit possession, by itinerant Muslim religious specialists(164).

The need for such cooperative arrangements is clearly understandable. The economy of Mombasa and of the surrounding area was largely agricultural. Given the abundance of land and the prevailing level of technology, the production of wealth was largely dependent on the availability of labour to the men who controlled the land, the elder males who were the heads of homesteads. The acquisition and control of subordinates within the homestead of the Mijikenda elder, or within the following of the Arab or Swahili landholder, was very important, economically and in terms of status. Describing the size of his Kauma grandfather's following, one man said to me 'if you have no people, you are nobody'(165).

Since there was no police or army, no effective

161. MHT 31.
162. ADC Rabai - Land Officer, 28 March 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/11/218.
163. Krapf, Journal, p.123, 25 April 1848, CMS CA 5 O 172
164. Krapf, Journal, p.117, 13 March 1848, CMS CA 5 O 172; also p.28, 'Excursions to Dshombo..', CMS CA 5 O 167
165. Int 53a, p.14.

state apparatus in Mombasa or the hinterland to recapture runaways, the goodwill and cooperation of other elders and wealthy men in controlling subordinates, whether junior lineage members or slaves, was essential. Similarly, where disputes over land did occur between Mijikenda elders and the heads of Mombasa clans, each of whom claimed for their group the right to cultivate certain areas, these could be settled peacefully, despite a degree of bluster(166).

The picture of Mombasa left by these accounts is not that of a compact city state, but of a small town trading agricultural products around the local area, governed by a vague system of alliances and accommodations between different groups of powerful men, whose cooperation with one another maintained their influence.

Curiously, despite the actual closeness of this relationship, the separation of town and local hinterland expressed in Swahili culture is echoed in the Mijikenda view of the town. The missionary Krapf was told in the 1840s that Mijikenda dared not visit the island for fear of being made slaves(167), but despite this alleged separation, Krapf met and saw numbers of Mijikenda in Mombasa(168).

This curious ambivalence, the perceived division of two groups between which there was constant contact and a considerable if asymmetrical movement of population, is a product of the systems of patronage which located people

166. Emery, Journal, July 11-13 1825.
167. Krapf, 'Excursions to Dshombo...', p. 14, 24 March 1845, CMS CA 5 O 167.
168. Krapf, 'Journey to Pemba, Tanga and Mombas', p. 15, 13 March 1844, CMS CA 5 O 165.

within one group or the other. Membership of the group was not simply a matter of kin, despite the avowed importance of lineage and background on Mombasan society. Nor was membership of one group or the other entirely a question of residence, for the mainland settlements of some Swahili clearly intermingled with those of some Mijikenda. Rather it was that a population sharing the occupation of space and sharing kin ties was divided into two groups by the orientation of patron-client links. One set of such links led back to the island of Mombasa and the other to the kaya elders of the ridge. The ambivalence of the attitude of each group to the other grew out of the structure of the relationship between Mombasa and the hinterland, for the impression of danger implicit in this ambivalence limited contacts between the two areas to the channels established by the elders, the wealthy men, in each area: and by limiting these contacts, this ambivalence structured movement between the two groups in terms of dependence on one group of wealthy men or the other. Most of those Mijikenda met by Krapf in Mombasa were 'chiefs'(169).

This picture of considerable contact, and movement of population, between island and hinterland brings up again the vexed question of Swahili ethnicity. Emery wrote little of the 'Sohillis' in his journal, but in the description of the area that he published several years later, he depicts them as downtrodden indigenes, dispossessed by the Arabs(170). In the 1840s, Guillain was told that the Kilindini, the largest sub-group of the Twelve tribes of the Mombasa Swahili, were from 'Sungouaia', and in 1847 Krapf was told of

169. Krapf - Rev Venn, 26 September 1855, p. 3, CMS CA 5 O 114.
170. Emery, 'Short account of Mombasa..'.

> Shunguaya, a now ruined town on the coast of Malinde and the original seat of the Suahili, who being ejected by the Galla fled to Malinde; thence expelled again they retreated to the creek of Killefi and finally to Mombas..(171)

This story is no longer current among the Swahili of the Twelve Tribes, many of whom now claim Arabian origins. There is, however, another story of the African origins of the Swahili. This is contained within the traditions of some of the Mijikenda concerning Mombasa. Unlike the Singwaya story, the story of Mombasa is not shared by all the Mijikenda. It is specific to the Ribe, the Digo, the Chonyi and the Jibana, and it seems to have been current at least as long as has been that of Singwaya (172).

The theme of this story is usually that Mijikenda hunters were led to the island of Mombasa by a wounded elephant which they were tracking(173), that they settled for a while at the site of Fort Jesus, which was then a cave(174), but that most of them left when they were tricked out of possession of the land around the cave. The villains of the piece are sometimes Europeans, who took the land on the pretext that they needed an area to cure hides(175), and more often Arabs(176), but the message is clear - that the Mijikenda were the occupants of Mombasa(177), and that the Swahili are the descendants of that population. This claim refers not to those present-day inhabitants of Mombasa who on occasion

171. Krapf, Journal, p.76, 11 Oct 1847, CMS CA 5 O 172.
172. p.5, 'Further notes on the Wadigo', Digo District Station Diary, Oct 1925,KNA PC Coast 1/12/222
173. Int 21b, 46a.
174. Int 21b; MHT 27, 65.
175. MHT 65.
176. Int 43a.
177. ADC Rabai - DC Msa, 11 Oct 1909,KNA PC Coast 1/12/53

describe themselves as being Mijikenda and Swahili, but to the Twelve Tribes, the confederations of the older Swahili inhabitants who in the twentieth century have emphasised their distinctness from the 'new' Swahili, and some of whom shun the term Swahili.

The Mijikenda story of Mombasa is in one way a simple and straightforward political claim to primacy on the coast, particularly given the claim to the Fort, which was long the effective symbol of government. In the context of recent struggles over the political form of independence, the ownership of land and the rights of squatters, this story is charged with contemporary significance. But the accusations of Arab bad faith are not intrinsic to the story, for versions have been recorded suggesting a rather more harmonious relationship, and even suggesting that the Mijikenda were not absolutely the first inhabitants of the island, but shared it with the Mazrui(178). Claims that the Swahili are really just Mijikenda are not always intended as derogatory. They can be claims to unity. Some Ribe say, quite simply, that parts of the island were never taken from them, and continue to be theirs(179). The history of individual movements to the island in the twentieth century suggests that this was to an extent true - Ribe or Kauma could easily move in with relatives in the area of Mombasa known as Kilifi/Bondeni. Unlike the Singwaya story, in which there is a tendency for all to claim primacy, and which all claim as the story of their origin, the Mombasa story has not become common to all the Mijikenda. Some Giriama will tell the story, but will specify that it was the Digo and the Ribe who were

178. MHT 65.
179. Int 20a.

involved, not the Giriama(180).

The Mombasa story, though it appears in the traditions of origin after the migration from Singwaya, articulates very poorly with that story, on Spear's dating. The Digo and Ribe could not have drifted casually onto the island in pursuit of their elephant, for they would have found the Fort already built and the crossing to the island guarded by soldiers. Nor does the idea of their settlement on the island fit with the idea of a society dwelling entirely within the kaya. These stories strengthen the impression that the Mijikenda have no common origin, though some people ancestral to some of the present population may have come from the north. The interchange of people, the fluidity of ethnic categories, makes a mockery of any attempt to assign a single origin to one of the modern groups. What is important in these stories of Mombasa is the historical link between the hinterland and the population of Mombasa, the claim to ties of blood, and thence to reciprocal obligations that they imply.

That such ties exist is undeniable and unsurprising(181). A movement of dependants, many of them women, from the hinterland to Mombasa naturally produced a large number of town-dwellers with maternal kin in the hinterland. This relationship finds expression in the term adzomba, meaning 'sister's son', or, conversely, 'mother's brother', applied by some Mijikenda to the Swahili, and in the simplified stories of male Arab settlers coming to East Africa, taking local wives and

180. Int 46a.
181. see the comments of M H Abdulaziz, Muyaka: Popular 19th century Swahili poetry, Nairobi 1979, p. 23.

producing the Swahili(182). Mijikenda stories of Mombasa are in one way an attempt to assert more strongly a relationship with the people of the island established by women who bequeathed to their children their relatives but not their ethnicity. But it is also a hint as to the actual complexity of origins in an area where concepts of ethnicity have come to require the construction of unified, standard origins.

The Mijikenda stories of Mombasa provide another perspective on the specific relationships between certain Mijikenda groups and certain of the Twelve Tribes of Mombasa Swahili - that between the Ribe and the Kilifi, for example. These relationships are rather vaguely alluded to by Guillain and Krapf, who both see the Swahili group as the representatives and protectors of the attached Mijikenda group(183). More recent historians have differed over the balance of power in this relationship, but have persisted in seeing it as some kind of inter-governmental one, between two discrete polities(184), whereas the Digo and Ribe stories insist that the Kilifi are the Ribe, and that the Kilindini are the Digo, not that they represent them(185).

This is not to say that the Swahili 'are' Mijikenda, for they are not. It rather brings us again to the discussion of what precisely the term Swahili means. Clearly, it is not a matter of descent alone, as the preceding discussion implies. Nor can it simply be reduced to a question of a culture - though much of the

182. Int 5a.
183. Guillain, Documents..., p.244; Krapf, 'Excursions to Dshombo..', p.25, 25 March 1845, CMS CA 5 O 167.
184. Berg, 'Mombasa under the Busaidi..', Chap 2; Spear, The Kaya Complex.., pp.71-73.
185. Int 20a, 5b, 21b.

writing on early coastal history has in recent years focussed on the identification of certain cultural phenomena and has labelled these as 'Swahili'(186). Ethnicity, as Arens has pointed out, is not a question simply of a label attached to a certain set of cultural phenomena, but it is rather the setting of boundaries in relationships between people(187). The identification of the similarities in material culture along the East African coast is of considerable value in understanding the earlier history of that coast, but there is a danger in the use of the term Swahili as an ethnic category attached to these cultural phenomena. As Salim has pointed out, the frequent use of the term as one descriptive of ethnicity in the sense of shared descent is a fairly recent event(188), and its nineteenth-century use is in fact very much analogous to, and in a paradigm with, the use of the term Wanika. It seems entirely clear that the people of Mombasa generally defined themselves by their clan and patronage affiliations, not as Swahili(189). They claimed no common origins or complete cultural homogeneity, and the term Swahili, when it was used, specified their distinction from the Wanika rather than implying unity amongst themselves. The struggle of the colonial government to control this identity, to limit it within bounds of descent or cultural phenomena, was to be a major theme of twentieth-century history.

186. D Nurse and T Spear, The Swahili: reconstructing the history and language of an African society, 800-1500, Pennsylvania 1985.
187. Arens, 'The Waswahili..'
188. p.220, AI Salim, 'The elusive Mswahili: some reflections on his identity and culture', in Maw and Parkin (eds), Swahili language and Society, Wien 1985, pp. 215-227.
189. for example, in Transactions Register A4, 1895-97, the term Swahili occurs only as a rare clan-name; of 856 buyers and sellers, only 5 call themselves as-Swahili.

Like the Mijikenda, then, the Swahili are and were of diverse origins. All that can be said of the claims of some Mijikenda, that the Twelve Tribes of the Mombasa Swahili are Mijikenda, is that some individuals ancestral to some of the modern Ribe, Digo, and other Mijikenda were also ancestors of some of the present Twelve Tribes Swahili, and that the line between the two groups was clear but not impossible for an individual to cross.

While the economic changes of the later nineteenth century introduced new tensions into these complex relationships, their pattern was not fundamentally changed. The balance of the political and economic interdependence of hinterland and town shifted, but the interdependence itself did not end - indeed, it became more intricate, offering new options to townspeople and to Mijikenda.

By the 1840s, when Krapf and Guillain visited, major economic changes were under way but had yet to go very far. Mombasa was still not a great entrepot port, although the first Kamba caravans had come to the coast(190) and the Indian traders of Mombasa and Zanzibar were beginning to finance caravans into the interior(191). To some extent this deprived the Mijikenda, especially perhaps the Giriama, of their role as intermediaries. It has been argued that this, coupled with the removal of many of the Mazrui to Takaungu when the Busaidi took over Mombasa, led to something of a decline in contact between Mombasa and the inhabitants of its local hinterland(192). On the other hand, the

190. Guillain, Documents.., p.213.
191. Guillain, Documents.., p.238.
192. Berg, 'Mombasa under the Busaidi..', Chapter 2; P Koffsky, 'History of Takaungu, East Africa, 1830-1895' PhD thesis Wisconsin 1977.

recruitment of growing numbers of porters for the Mombasa caravans led some Mijikenda to enlist as porters, though there is some dispute as to how many porters were Mijikenda and how many were actual or run-away slaves(193). There was, moreover, another major change during this period, though it slightly post-dated the inception of the caravan trade, and its full effects were not felt until the 1860s. This was the planting of Pemba with clove trees, and the concomitant decline of grain cultivation on that island, long the breadbasket of the area. This gave a new importance to grain cultivation on the Kenya coast, a demand met largely from Malindi, but also from Mombasa(194). Mombasan landholders expanded their cultivation, and Mijikenda became more deeply involved with, and indebted to, an expanding class of planters-cum-traders from Mombasa.

Agricultural expansion and the demands of the caravan trade combined to make the later nineteenth century a period in which the economy required an increasing amount of labour, and prosperity more than ever required the ability to control labour. There had been a bearable complementarity between the demands of the maritime trade and of the harvest, the peak demand for labour in each coming at a different time. The caravan trade seems not to have been so seasonally restricted, partly since it might involve journeys of many months, so that the demands for labour now conflicted. Heads of households in Mombasa and in the hinterland faced increasing difficulties in controlling the time and

193. Compare Morton, 'Slaves and freedmen..', Chapter 2 and D Sperling 'The Growth of Islam among the Mijikenda of the Kenya coast', PhD thesis, SOAS 1989, p.50.
194. F Cooper, Plantation Slavery on the East African Coast, New Haven 1977, p.100.

product of their dependants and slaves, for they could easily find other work and new patrons. In 1888, among the conditions set by the 'people of Mombasa' for the acceptance of Imperial British East Africa Company rule was that

> Should any domestic slave wish to engage themselves for work they are only to be employed with the consent of their masters. NB The idea is to prevent their slaves being sent into the interior on Caravan duty which causes their own shambas and other affairs being neglected for want of labour(195)

In 1844, when Krapf arrived in Mombasa, the population of the town was still fluctuating dramatically with the seasons, or so the very different population estimates given by Krapf and Guillain would suggest(196). Krapf set up a mission station in Rabai, where he was perturbed by what he saw as a new development - the steady encroachment onto the lands of the Mijikenda by coastal Muslims.

> These people craftily possess themselves by degrees of the lowlands of the Wanika, and constructing small villages, here and there, along the mountain range, people them with their slaves, gain over the Wanika by trifling

195. Attached, Mackenzie - Euan-Smith, 25 Oct 1888, IBEA 1a.
196. Guillain, who visited from May to June, put the population at 2,500 to 3,000(Documents..p.236), while Krapf, after years of residence, put it at 8-10,000 (Krapf, Travels and Missionary Labours, London, 1860, p.220).

> presents and purchase their produce very cheaply."(197)

Krapf's perception of this was shaped by his concerns as a Christian missionary, to whom Islam was a threat, and also by his own experiences. He had initially relied on Muslim acquaintances to establish himself among the Rabai, but turned against them when he discovered that they were, not altogether surprisingly, trying to limit his activities. He fought a long and not particularly successful battle against the indifference of the Rabai and the hostility of the Swahili of Jomvu and Mombasa(198). The Jomvu clearly could exercise some influence over the Rabai, through the elders of Rabai, but this was far from any form of government(199). More clear from Krapf's account is the weakness of any central authority in Rabai among the elders, and the relationship between powerful men in each area:

> A great number of Wanika were in town today for the purpose of making our chief pay a bullock, for he had allowed the slaves of Sheikh Jabiri of Mombas to cut down a tree without the permission of the other chiefs. The powerless chief was fined by his own people(200).

Krapf's initial ally and eventual opponent, the archetype of the land-grabbing Muslim, was Abdullah ben Pisila.

> Abdalla (son of a Hindoo named Pisila) is a

197. Krapf, Travels and missionary labours.., p.139.
198. ibid, p.181.
199. Krapf, Journal, p.155, 3 Sept 1848, also pp.69-71, 30 Sept 1847, CMS CA 5 O 172.
200. Krapf, Journal, p.209, 25 Dec 1848, CMS CA 5 O 172.

> native of Cutch in India. He came hither in merchant business like all the other Hindoos who are here, chiefly natives of Cutch. He turned Musulman (as many of his countrymen do) some 20 years ago. At first he lived in the village Rabbay amongst the pagan Wanika, whose favour he had won by prudent conduct and by accommodation to their superstitious practices. A dying Wanika made him the heir of a considerable piece of ground situated near the creek...on the foot of the hill of Rabbay. There he erected a cottage and cultivated a plantation which provides him with coco-nuts, cassada, rice, maize and other eatables. A pagan family associated with him assists him in digging the ground etc(201)

Abdullah also traded Mijikenda foodstuffs(202). He had achieved this position partly through marriage to the daughter of Bwana Hamadi, whom Krapf called the Swahili 'chief' of the Rabai and of the Chonyi(203). His life story makes clear the fluidity of ethnic boundaries, the ease with which the normative rules of class and marriage could be broken in Mombasa's community, and with which a Muslim could live among the Mijikenda, despite the general assertion that even Mijikenda converts to Islam were driven out, lest they alienate their clans' land under Muslim law(204).

The ease with which such figures could obtain dependants

201. Krapf, 'Excursions to Dshombo...', 23 March 1845, CMS CA 5 0 167.
202. Krapf, Journal, p.18, 10 Feb 1847 CMS CA 5 0 171
203. Krapf, Journal, p.18, 8 Feb 1847, CMS CA 5 0 171; and Journal, p.76, 11 Oct 1847, CMS CA 5 0 172.
204. p.14,R W Hamilton, 'Land tenure among the Bantu Wanyika of East Africa', in JAS, XX, 1920, pp.13-18.

through their own superior access to credit and trade goods is striking. Clients did not have to be sought - they offered themselves. Krapf was several times asked to provide money to help those in difficulties over bride-price, or short of food. Some offered a gift, called heshima, literally 'respect', to acknowledge the obligation thus placed on them(205). Others sought to obtain help through a religious expression of their obligation to Krapf,

> I was visited by Marunga, who said that the people would embrace my doctrines, if I would lay out a sum of 100 dollars to buy corn for the time of famine which would most likely come upon them in consequence of there being no rain(206)

Krapf failed to establish such relationships, indeed campaigned against them: 'they commence to perceive that they cannot expect from me what the Mohammedan leaders are obliged to give them'(207).The mission gained no following.

Abdullah, for his part, is the first recorded example of a type of which we hear much more in the early colonial period - a trader and planter, with many indebted clients acquired through trade, and with land in Mijikenda areas worked for him by Mijikenda, growing grain or fruit crops for the Mombasan market. Significantly, Abdullah was a member of the Twelve tribes by marriage,and such a link, by birth or marriage, also characterises the later

205. Krapf, Journal, p. 128, 1 May 1848, CMS CA 5 0 172.
206. Krapf, Journal, p. 215, 31 December 1848, CMS CA 5 0 172
207. Krapf, 'Excursions to Dshombo..', p. 2, 29 January 1845, CMS CA 5 0 166.

traders(208). Krapf treated Abdullah's presence as a new phenomenon. Seventy years later, British officials refused to accept that such people could have been established for any length of time in areas that had been designated as 'Native reserves'(209). The officials were clearly wrong, and Krapf may have been. Abdullah had been trading for twenty years, since Emery's time, before Busaidi rule drove the Mazrui from Mombasa or pushed Mombasa into a new role in the Indian Ocean trade; before the first Kamba caravan reached the coast, and long before coastal caravans penetrated inland. None of the conventional arguments suggest any new departures in economic patterns in the 1820s that would help us see Abdullah as an innovator, and his role as a novel one. Perhaps it was not, and he was not. Such figures may long have been intermediaries in the local trade. The nineteenth century did, however, see an increase in their numbers, their wealth and their influence, as the grain trade grew.

The ties of debt were complex. The trader Tshakka, to whom the Rabai chief was indebted, and who held the chief's daughter as security for this debt, was himself indebted to traders in Mombasa and avoided going there(210). When the missionaries hired Bwana Heri, a Mombasan caravan leader, to guide an expedition to Chagga, he was promptly kidnapped by his Mombasan creditors, and Krapf and his colleague Rebmann had to bail him out(211). Some of the porters hired for this

208. such as Said bin Sheikh in Kilifi, and Ali bin Salim al-Mandri, in Kidutani.
209. see Judgement in Civil Case No 60 of 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/10/209; also Ag DC Kilifi - SCC, 10 Aug 1922, KNA PC Coast 1/14/177.
210. Krapf, Journal, p. 155, 3 Sept 1848, CMS CA 5 0 172.
211. Krapf, Journal, p. 185, 13 Nov 1848, CMS CA 5 0 172.

same trip would only come to Rabai at night, to avoid their creditors. Despite this precaution, one of them was apprehended, and lost his wages before he had earned them(212).

These events reveal a little of the complexity of the obligations imposed by debt. Mijikenda borrowing food in time of famine offered their juniors in security for these loans, the labour of these juniors being in lieu of interest. Clearly some of these debts were never repaid, and quite possibly no-one expected them to be. The mortgaging of fruit trees, particularly coconut palms, had already became another way of securing a loan, and establishing a relationship, in the 1840s(213). The product of the trees was in this case the interest received by the mortgagee(214). In other cases, as that of Bwana Heri, a debt could simply be a claim on the potential earning power of the debtor, a claim which could be called in as soon as that potential was realised. The creditor did not directly call on the labour of the debtor or their juniors, but could claim the product of this labour. This was an obligation as onerous as that imposed on many bought slaves, whose relationship to their master was similarly expressed through sharing the wages that they earned in labour for others.

Krapf and Guillain both noted that Swahili and Mijikenda settlements were intermingled. In the 1840s, Krapf noted

212. Krapf, Journal, p. 184, 12 November 1848, and p. 185, 14 November 1848, CMS CA 5 O 172.
213. Krapf, Journal, p. 124, 1 May 1848, CMS CA 5 O 172; also George David - CMS, 24 April 1879, CMS CA 5 O 6/5.
214. Rev Chancellor - Wright, 4 February 1874, CMS CA 5 O 5 2 .

that on the shores of Port Reitz, the southern arm of the creek from Mombasa, stood both Mijikenda homesteads and Mombasan plantations, and that the village of Dshombo on the mainland was divided into Muslim and pagan halves(215).

Guillain, in 1847, detailed the extent of Mombasan settlement in the hinterland, listing a number of villages of the Twelve Tribes on the mainland(216). Among these villages are some - Kidutani, Kinung'una and Mwakirunge - where today the inhabitants insist that they are Ribe or Jibana, and always have been, that the villages are on their land; but that, of course, the Swahili tribes to whom Guillain attributes these villages are themselves by another name(217). Guillain underlined the importance of the hinterland traffic to Mombasa, saying of Mombasa island,

> Les productions agricoles sont insignifiantes on n'y récolte qu'un trés faible quantité de millet et de maïs, outre quelques legumes et fruits...La plus grand partie des subsistances necessaires à la population sont tirées de ses dependances sur la terre ferme, et des pays oua-nika(218)

Guillain provides the first estimates of the slave population of the mainland farms of the Mombasans, giving it as 4,500 out of a total population of 6,000(219). The figure is a high one. It would make

215. Krapf, 'Excursions to Dshombo...', 13 March 1845, CMS CA 5 O 167.
216. Guillain, Documents.., p.259.
217. Int 20a, 40a.
218. Guillain, Documents.., p.265.
219. ibid, p.238.

Mombasa's slave labour force in 1847 as large as that of Malindi in the 1870s - a force which required the import of 600 slaves a year to maintain its numbers(220). There is no sign of this scale of slave imports to Mombasa before the 1860s. It would be more reasonable to see some of these labourers as dependants, subordinates, attached to their master through indebtedness or choice, rather than as slaves bought and sold in the market.

Nevertheless, Mombasa's slave population was growing during the mid-nineteenth century. Much of the product of the intensified slave trading of the nineteenth century was absorbed within East Africa(221). In Emery's time, slaves were not uncommon, but there had been no flourishing import trade. Emery looked hard for a maritime slave trade, but found little(222). The chiefs of Mombasa in his time were more concerned about duties on grain than the ban on slave trading(223). However, by the 1860s, the demand for agricultural and portering labour was growing, and areas like Mtwapa, previously sparsely populated, became the site of slave towns.

Though some have assumed that the Mijikenda played little part in this labour force because they could so easily have run away, there is evidence that Mijikenda were involved. Krapf found boats on the creeks of Mombasa crewed by Mijikenda children.

> The crew of the new boat...consisted of two little

220. Cooper, Plantation slavery.., pp.86-88.
221. Abdul Sheriff, Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar; Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873, London/Nairobi 1987, Chapter 1.
222. Emery, Journal, 29 Aug 1824; and 8 November 1824.
223. Emery, Journal, 29 September 1824, and 5 December 1825.

> slave boys who had both been sold by their parents in the great famine(224)

This apparent contradiction arises, as has been noted, partly from the imprecision of the term 'slave'. The process of enslavement can take many forms. Slaves were not always unwilling captives of war, victims of raiding, and the implications of the term 'slavery' confuse a situation where subordinates could easily join a new homestead and be incorporated within it. The history of such movements of individuals between Mijikenda homesteads, and to Mombasa, established family ties that made other such movements easier - whether the dependants were given by homestead heads or moved voluntarily; 'voluntarily', that is, in the sense of being able to choose between different forms of subjection. In fleeing to Mombasa, they were not free, but in a society where safety depended on belonging, few were. From the start of the colonial period, records were filled with legal cases, complaints and enquiries concerning Mijikenda who had fled to the town. Usually, they were women, but young men too sought refuge in the town(225). In the mission stations, the flow of runaways from Mijikenda areas began before that from the coast, though it is the plight of slaves fleeing from Mombasa that has received historical attention(226).

> "About the end of the year 1876 there commenced a movement which in later years assumed very extensive and alarming proportions and caused no little trouble and anxiety to

224. Krapf, 'Excursions to Dshombo..', p.29, 26 March 1845, CMS CA 5 O 167.
225. See eg Palethorpe, ADC Giriama, Safari Diary, 27 Nov 1916, KNA PC Coast 1/12/264.
226. Salim, Swahili-speaking peoples, pp.48-50.

> the missionaries. I refer to the migration of the runaway slaves towards the mission stations. I remember quite well the first man and his wife who came...they were the slaves of a Giriama man...It was not until some time after this that slaves from the coast began to come to us(227)

Some individuals ran from Mombasa to the missions or to the runaway slave settlements, some ran from their homesteads to the missions, some ran from their homesteads to other homesteads, some ran from homesteads to Mombasa. Such confused activity might seem bizarre. The choice made by those running to Mombasa might seem inexplicable, given that so many had voted with their feet and fled Mombasa. Yet there was a logic to it. The treatment of subordinates varied considerably, in Mombasa and in Mijikenda homesteads.

Some Mijikenda settled on the mainland immediately around the island of Mombasa, in Likoni, Mtongwe or Kisauni, where they became small farmers, having their own plots of a few coconut palms and other trees(228). Krapf saw such a settlement of Digo at Mtopanga, north of Mombasa, in 1845(229). The use of the land on which they settled might be given by a Mombasan who converted them to Islam, and assumed the role of father by supplying a bride, or bride price(230). Some Digo converts to Islam were settled by their Muslim patrons around the head of Mtwapa creek, towards Junju,

227. HK Binns, 'Recollections written in 1898 of experiences in 1878', handwritten ms in KNA HK Binns Collection, pp.9-10.
228. Int 5c.
229. Krapf, 'Forty miles journey to Takaongo..', pp. 34-35, 5 July 1845, CMS CA 5 O 168.
230. Int 61b.

as trading agents(231). Those settled in Mtongwe and Kisauni helped harvest the nuts from their patron's palms, or cleared his ground for cultivation. In Likoni and Mtongwe, some migrants assumed the identity of one of the Swahili Three Tribes(232).

Cooper has noted a contrast in the control of slave cultivators between Mombasa and the Malindi area, which was resettled by Arabs and Swahili only in the 1840s(233). In Malindi, there were large plantations with supervisors, and slaves were set an amount of work on their owners plantation each day, and were given their subsistence. The system more common in Mombasa, where slaves lived in their own villages, organised their own time and paid a part of the crop to their owners, may have grown out of pre-existing arrangements with Mijikenda dependants.

Slaves and subordinates worked in other ways, where the opportunities for freedom and earning for oneself were even greater. Men and women might serve in the house as domestics, might learn a craft, might work as casual portering labour round the harbour and share the earnings with their master/patron, might work as fishermen or crew on the boats of their masters for a share of the takings(234). Women might become concubines or wives, providing sexual as well as domestic services(235). In the intricate hierarchy of slaves and dependants(236),

231. Int 9a, 9d.
232. Int 61b.
233. Cooper, Plantation slavery.., p.174; Morton, 'Slaves and freedmen..', p.75.
234. Cooper, Plantation slavery.., pp.187-189; also 'Questions on slavery', Tritton, 30 Jan 1903, KNA PC Coast 1/1/93; also Admr. - IBEA Sec, 22 March 1893, IBEA 12(3).
235. Tritton, 'Questions on slavery',KNA PC Coast 1/1/93.
236. Cooper, Plantation slavery.., p.223.

similarity of language and family connections in the town instantly put the Mijikenda immigrant above the slave marched or shipped from southern Tanzania or Malawi.

For Mijikenda men and women, such options had their appeal. The demands on women's labour within Mijikenda society were considerable, and newly-married women in particular were very much at the mercy of their in-laws(237). Migration to Mombasa even now endures as an attractive option for Mijikenda women - life as a wife or concubine in Mombasa at least relieved a woman of her duties as a cultivator. A Muslim woman should not labour in public, in the fields or elsewhere. Moreover, women may under Islamic law inherit property and manage it for their own use, rights which were generally denied to Mijikenda women. Islam is often accused of imposing restrictions on women, yet it could offer to Mijikenda women a degree of protection and autonomy not available elsewhere.

Young Mijikenda men faced a smaller work load than did the women, but the restrictions on their activities and the demands made upon them were still irksome. Politically, they were subject to elder males, and while they were not expected to work regularly in agriculture they herded or tapped for, and were still bound to help work the land of, the homestead head(238). Some would set up their own homestead as soon as they were married, to avoid this restriction(239), but the age at which they married was controlled by their father, or the homestead head. They could not marry before their

237. p.87, HMT Kayamba, 'Notes on the Wadigo', in TNR XXIII, 1947, pp. 80-96; also Int 6a.
238. Int 17a.
239. Champion, The Agiryama.., p.10.

elder brothers(240), and were in competition with their fathers for women - for older men wanted young wives to work the fields(241). The later nineteenth century saw an intensification of these tensions, centring around the bride- price.

Informants say that until this time marriages among the Mijikenda had involved a payment of grain and millet beer to the bride's father by the groom's, the amount of which payment was not negotiable(242). From sometime in the nineteenth century, this was replaced by a payment of money or, among the Giriama and Duruma, cattle, the amount of which was negotiable and which proved to be subject to the most severe inflationary pressure.

> It was money, a shami, a shami was bridewealth. A shami is a dollar [Maria Theresa dollar=2 rupees=4 shillings] ..my wife got 190 dollars, my father-in-law was given it, and I got a wife. Now it's gone up, five thousand, six thousand shillings for one wife..My mother was married for forty dollars, just forty dollars for my mother. My grandmother got 22 dollars, and my great grandmother was given for just three dollars, just like giving her away, a whole wife!(243)

Informants now blame the bride price, as they blame much else, on the Arabs, who began to offer money to buy Mijikenda women as brides(244). Krapf too blamed the practice on the Arabs, when he reported it in Rabai in

240. Int 20a.
241. Champion, The Agiryama..., p.15.
242. Int 20a.
243. Int 25a, p.3.
244. Int 20a.

the 1840s, where the price of a bride was three or four dollars(245). The actual stimulus for this inflation may lie more in the nature of accumulation in Mijikenda society.

Some individuals had begun, by the mid-nineteenth century, to acquire considerable wealth, and the growth in the market for grain, ivory and other goods offered new opportunities. To take advantage of them, though, required an ability to call on the labour of others, as farmers and porters, on a regular basis, and to call on it at times when others might have their own work to do, at harvest time. Some forms of casual labour existed, usually involving the clearing of ground for cultivation in return for a payment of grain or palm-wine(246). But this offered no permanent, reliable labour force for the weeding and harvest of crops, protecting the ripening grain against birds and wild pigs, or the lengthy process of turning the harvested grain into flour. Nor did it provide porters to carry grain and fruit to the heads of the creeks for shipment. The only institution of Mijikenda society allowing this was the homestead, there being no contracts, or means to enforce them.

There was, moreover, no central authority, so that the only way of turning money into power was to have a large homestead, with many dependants. The homestead head's rights to property held by members of the homestead, and rights to the labour of members of it, were established and were upheld by such law as existed, that administered by the kambi; a law which could come into conflict with accumulation by individuals, even if they

245. Krapf, Journal, pp. 90-91, 14 Dec 1847, CMS CA 5 O 172.
246. Int 66a, 17a.

were elders. Guarantees to property other than this one could only be upheld by force. Only in a small area near Vumba, where the Digo Mwakikonga established a form of hereditary government, did any larger institutions develop(247).

Within the productive unit, the homestead, new tensions were generated by the introduction of a negotiable, inflating bride price. It allowed elders to assert control of their juniors' earnings outside the homestead. Even if a son served as a caravan porter to earn money, he had to hand over his earnings to the homestead head if he expected the homestead head to pay his bridewealth. Sons had no control over how their homestead head used this money. The competition between fathers and sons for wives exacerbated the resulting tensions. A father, faced with the choice of paying for a wife for his son or buying himself another wife, might often decide in his own favour. Among the Duruma and the Digo matrilineality had moved such tensions outside the homestead, as the maternal uncle was responsible for bridewealth(248). But the practice developed of buying slave, or at least non-Duruma, wives, whose offspring would belong to the patrilineage, having no matrilineage. For such wives, the maternal uncle would not pay bride-wealth, so that the dispute over the use of resources within the homestead, over who should get the wife, emerged here too(249). Disputes frequently arose, with young men leaving to seek better treatment elsewhere, in other homesteads or in the town of Mombasa(250).

247. Spear, The Kaya complex.., p.118.
248. Thanks to Jeanne Bergman of UCLA Berkeley for much useful discussion on this point.
249. Annual report, Rabai Sub-district, 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/1/145.
250. Int 14a.

To describe such conflicts within Mijikenda society is not to suggest that life in Mombasa was, in contrast, always easy for slaves or clients, the women and men who generally did the least pleasant work for little or no remuneration. It is rather to argue that Mijikenda individuals were constantly evaluating the options open to them, seeking to avoid discipline and hard work, and Mombasa was by no means always the worst option for them.

While Mombasa in the later nineteenth century offered new opportunities for Mijikenda men and women in flight from their homesteads and seeking new patrons, its economy drew other Mijikenda, who did not leave their homesteads, into new forms of dependency and created new networks of clients in the hinterland. Powerful individuals emerged among the Mijikenda with large followings of their own, such as the Digo immigrant Mwavuo among the Giriama(251), Mkoka wa Mbeu among the Kauma(252), and Mwakikonga among the Digo near Vumba(253). Such men had their own alliances and arrangements with coastal traders. Meanwhile, inland from the creeks of Mombasa and Mtwapa and Kilifi, the planters and traders of Kidutani, Mwakirunge, and Konjora found their trade increasingly lucrative. Communities of Mijikenda Muslims developed around them. While Mijikenda migrants to Mombasa converted to Islam, proselytism in the hinterland had not been a feature of coastal Islam until this time, but the intensified trade produced individual networks of clientage expressed through conversion. This was not solely a desire on the part of the trader/creditor for a religious expression of his

251. Champion, 1967, p.15.
252. Int 53a.
253. Spear, The Kaya Complex.., pp.116-119, also WF McKay, 'A precolonial history of the southern Kenya coast', PhD thesis, Boston, 1975, p.137.

client's obligations to him. For young men establishing their own homesteads, conversion might provide freedom from the demands of their elders, from obligations to kin and the gerontocracy(254) - in the same way that immigrants to new areas, like Mwavuo, prospered partly through the ability to choose their own obligations that their immigrant status gave them.

The area under grain crops expanded and, in the last years of the century, first Rabai and then the northern Mijikenda ridge areas came to be planted with coconut palms(255). Many of the Mijikenda who planted these soon lost control of them to Swahili or Arabs to whom they were indebted, having borrowed grain from them in time of shortage, or received advances of cash or goods for crops which they never delivered(256).

Such debts, once contracted, were difficult to discharge. Mortgages were often secured on fruit trees, the creditor receiving the product of the trees until the debt was repaid in lieu of interest - usury being forbidden to Muslims. Thus deprived of their earnings, debtors found repayment difficult. Some debtors handed over their junior kin to repay advances(257). Indebtedness became a part of the established pattern of paying coastal creditors with people. The practice of kidnapping children from other homesteads for handing over in this way had existed in Krapf's time(258). With

254. for a more recent example of this, see D Parkin, Palms, Wine and Witnesses, San Francisco, 1972
255. Binns, 'Recollections..', p.28; also PC Coast - ADC Rabai, 12 Dec 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/10/88; also 'Excursion to the Wanika division of Keriama', p.21, Feb 1845, CMS CA 5 0 166.
256. DC Msa - PC, 2 Oct 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/11/267; see also contents of KNA PC Coast 1/19/1, on indebtedness.
257. Binns, 'Recollections..', p.25.
258. Krapf, Journal, pp.87-88, Nov 1847, CMS CA 5 0 172.

dependants becoming a more valuable commodity, it worsened later in the century(259), and continued under the rule of the Imperial British East Africa Company according to the Company Administrator, Mackenzie, who tried to ban it.

> "It has been reported to me that the Wanika and Giriama tribes are now making war upon each other and selling their captives into slavery."(260)

The insecurity this generated increased the importance of belonging to a large homestead, being a person belonging to a somebody: mtu wa watu - the parallel of the importance to the wealthy of having followers(261). For some Mijikenda, tensions within their homestead, and reasons for leaving it, were increased by the head of homestead's indebtedness, leaving junior males with nothing to inherit and little real chance of having their bride wealth provided for them. The involuntary movement of dependents to Mombasa was increasingly supplemented by a voluntary movement of men and women to town, in search of a better deal.

In Mombasa itself, the replacement in 1837 of the Mazrui sultans by governors representing the Busaidi Sultan of Zanzibar had not transformed society. Government of the town was still accomplished through a series of accommodations between powerful groups, rather than through the strength of central institutions(262). In

259. Int 53a.
260. Proclamation, 1 May 1890, contained in Ordinances and Regulations of the IBEA Co, 7 June 1894, PRO FO 2 74.
261. Int 53a.
262. Berg, 'Mombasa under the Busaidi..', p.98

dealing with the Arab and Swahili clans the Busaidi governors did, however, have a considerable advantage over the Mazrui who preceded them - a small force of Baluchi soldiers. This allowed them to dispense with the necessity of relying on Mijikenda levies, and the Mijikenda indeed had little to do with the new governors, finding themselves generally excluded from this level of politics. The new governors also found their position rather more lucrative than the Mazrui had, since as the volume of trade grew so did their takings from customs(263).

Excluded from government, the Mijikenda remained intimately involved with the economy of Mombasa; and even with the Busaidi governors. When the IBEA Company took over the administration of the coast in 1888, and when the subsequent British Protectorate was declared in 1895, the governor of Mombasa was one Salim bin Khalfan el-Busaidi. Like most Arab officials, he continued to function under British rule. He and his son, Ali bin Salim, who succeeded him as governor, became rich through prudent investment and gross abuse of power. Ali bin Salim, in particular, became a major land-owner in Mombasa, Malindi and elsewhere on the coast(264). Like several others, he and his father accrued their wealth partly through acquiring mortgages on the property of others - from Digo converts to Islam living in Likoni, from Swahili farming the mainland at Changamwe, and from Arabs and Indians living on the island(265). Numbers of

263. Guillain, Documents.., p.204
264. Salim, Swahili-speaking Peoples.., pp.84-85, 98-99.
265. See for example Transactions Register A5, for 1897. A 10% sample of this included 45 sales or mortgages of land, in 20 of which Salim bin Khalfan was the buyer or mortgagee.

the traders who were the creditors of Mijikenda clients were themselves in debt to Ali bin Salim and others. Ali bin Salim's land on the island was inhabited by a collection of slaves and Mijikenda clients who had fled there(266). The family also owned land near Kilifi creek, obtained, it is said, through a family tie to the Kauma(267).

Life in Mombasa was still a matter of belonging. Government was achieved indirectly through the heads of the communities, the Tamims of the Swahili Twelve Tribes and the heads of the Arab clans(268). There was no general system of justice, the town being served by the courts of two Islamic sects, the Shafi for the Twelve Tribes and others and the Ibadi for the Omani Arabs(269).

Physically, the town was in two sections at the time of Guillain's visit; the stone quarters of the Arab families and their followers near to the Fort, and the clay-built quarters of Kilifi, Bondeni and Mji wa Kale, occupied by the Swahili, towards Ras Kiberamuni(270). At the turn of the century, residence patterns still reflected allegiance and group membership, rather than status. Some quarters of the town were named after the family or clan which occupied them - such as the Mandhri

266. Int 60a.
267. Int 53a.
268. Berg, 'Mombasa under the Busaidi..', p.98; Kindy, Life and Politics.., Chapter 6.
269. M Swartz, 'Religious courts, community and ethnicity among the Swahili of Mombasa: an historical study of social boundaries', Africa, XLIX, 1, 1979, pp.29-41.
270. Guillain, Documents.., p.258.

quarter(271). A third division to the town was developing at the turn of the century - to the north and west of the two other areas. This, sometimes known as Miembeni(272), contained the quarter of Hailendi. Here much of the land was owned by Ali bin Salim, and on it slaves, freed slaves and clients, newcomers to the town, built their houses, and let portions of them to other similar people(273). These people were connected by bondage, debt, or religious conversion to townspeople, but their obligations did not require them to live with their patrons. Still, working for others, they could pay their owners or patrons a portion of their wages(274). Some, indeed, began to acquire dependants of their own. In the early colonial period it was these people who came to provide the bulk of Mombasa's casual labour force, until their communities were uprooted by the town plans of the 1920s.

By 1890, no simple ethnic category for these people had yet emerged. A few of those from Mijikenda groups identified themselves as such, as Mdigo or Mduruma(275). Some identified themselves as recent converts by calling themselves el-Muslim(276), one calling himself 'Mmake el-Muslim of the Nine clans'(277), and so simultaneously claiming recent arrival in the town and membership of the Mombasan Nine Tribes. Others adopted the clan name of their patrons, or those who had converted them to Islam, one as 'Abdullah el-Muslim, or convert to Muhammedanism through the instrumentality of Mbarak bin

271. See Entry 56A of 1895, Transactions register A3.
272. Int 61a.
273. Int 61a.
274. M Beech, 'Slavery on the East Coast of Africa', JAS, XV, 1915-16, pp.145-9.
275. Entry 331A of 1900, Transactions Register A9.
276. Entry 184A of 1895, Transactions register A4.
277. Entry 423A of 1903, Transactions Register A14.

Mohammed el-Shikeli'(278). Some simply identified themselves as 'slave of' or 'follower of'(279). To identify oneself as belonging to a clan, a town group, was more important than to claim membership of some larger ethnic group, though the status of the newcomer in their adopted group might be low.

This pattern was to change dramatically over the first three decades of colonial rule, as ethnicity rather than clan came to be of increasing importance. Numbers of migrants to Mombasa came to describe themselves not by clan or family affiliation but as 'Swahili', an enormously elastic category which obscured rather than revealed the origins of the heterogeneous population that took it up. The elasticity of this category contrasted sharply with colonial notions of discrete and inherited ethnicity, illustrated most sharply in the case of Arab identity, which came to be a privilege requiring proof of descent(280). In 1895, these changes had barely begun. Even the Arabicisation of Twelve Tribes clan names, with its implication of claims to an Arab identity, was by no means general(281). In the next few years, the 'Swahili' population of the coast grew apace. In the context of the chronic labour problems that affected the colonial economy on the coast, officials came to find the complex nature of ethnicity, and the economic relationships that were bound up in it, particularly trying.

278. Entry 648A of 1903, Transactions Register A14.
279. Entries 193A and 275A of 1899, Transactions Register A8, also 185A, 205A, 352A, 361A of 1900, Transactions Register A9.
280. See Chapters 3 and 5, below.
281. In a 10% sample of Transactions Register A4, 1895-97, 17 out of 41 ocurrences of Swahili clan names were Arabicised. In a similar sample from 1905, all occurences were Arabicised

2. "Why the natives will not work" Networks of labour 1887 - 1917

British colonial rule is generally associated with the end of slavery in East Africa. In 1890, two years after the Imperial British East African Company had begun to administer the coast of what is now Kenya, the Sultan of Zanzibar, in whose name the Company governed, issued a proclamation outlawing the trade in slaves and making free any child subsequently born to slave parents, or any slave whose owner died(1). Seventeen years later, in 1907, the British Protectorate administration, which had replaced the Company in 1895, banned slavery entirely(2). Such is the uncomplicated vision of colonial rule as a liberating force preserved today in the historical recollections of many Mijikenda, who tell stories equating Arab rule with slavery, an oppression brought to an end by colonialism(3). Yet, in the last years of slavery, British officials on the coast were its staunchest defenders, determinedly trying to stave off proposals for the final abolition of slavery.

This apparent contradiction arose from officials' concern with the maintenance of an adequate supply of labour for themselves and for European entrepreneurs. In the period of Company rule the pressing demand for porters, up to 2,000 of whom were employed at any one time(4), led the IBEA to employ many slaves. They turned a blind eye to the regulations which forbade British subjects to do so, and

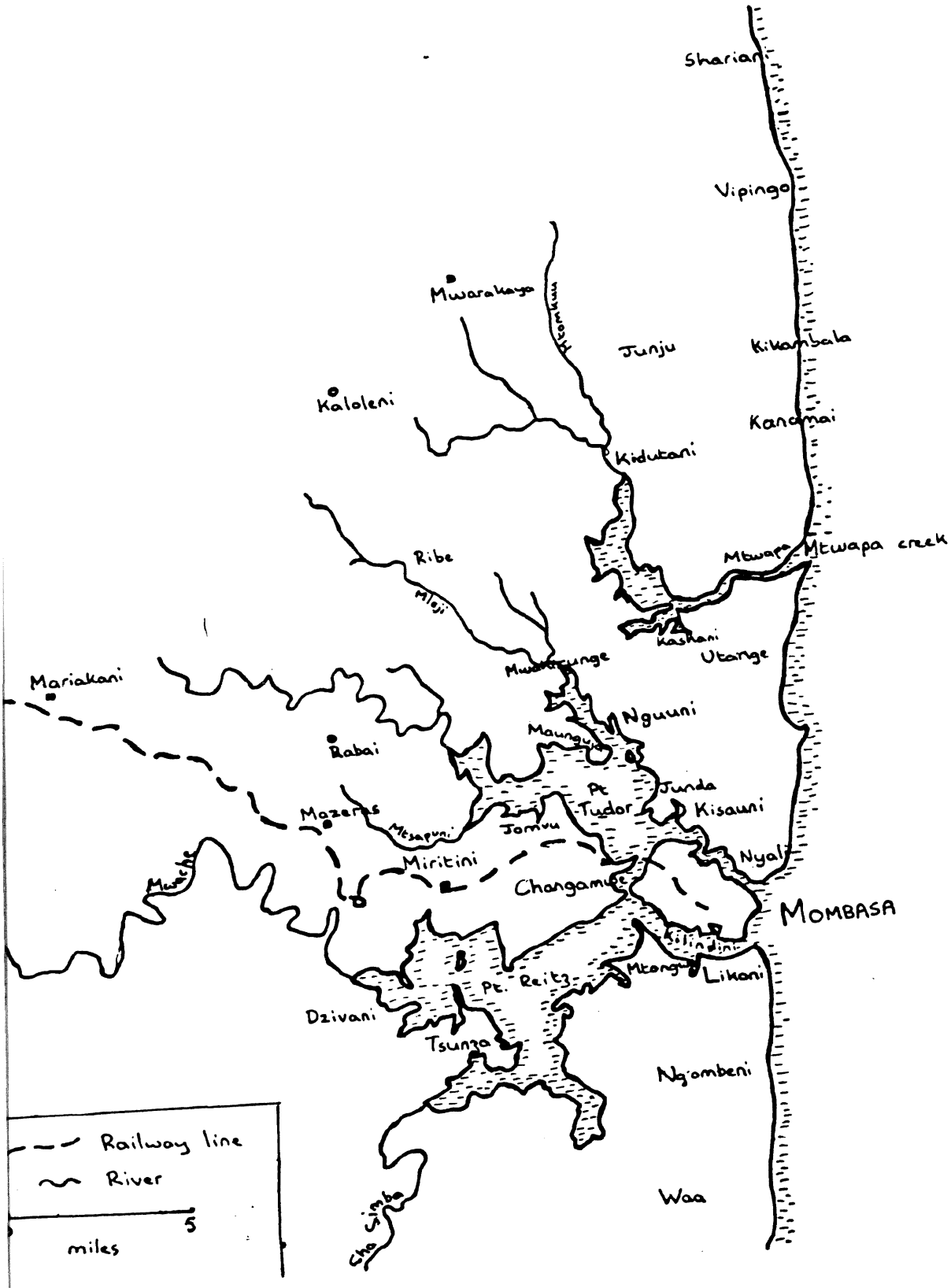
Swahili-speaking peoples...

1. Salim, , pp. 66-67; PL Mc Dermott, British East Africa or IBEA, London,
2. See 'Abolition of Legal Status of Slavery Ordinance, 1907, in KNA AG/4/429.
3. Int 40a.
4. Pigott - IBEA Sec., 24 June 1891, IBEA 52(2).

joined in the established system whereby a portion, often half, of the wages of these slaves was paid in advance to their owners(5). And it was not only for caravan porterage that the Company used slaves. On the experimental plantations that the Company ran, on confiscated land near Malindi, the Company employed slaves whom they had effectively bought from Arab owners - the arrangement being that after a certain period the slaves would have earned the equivalent of the price paid for them by the Company and would then be freed by the Company. The Administrator of the Company 'consider[ed] the arrangement a good one, but that the price is too high'(6). The IBEA showed an understandable sensitivity about the details of this arrangement, instructing that 'The term "estate Labour" should be substituted for that of "slave labour"'(7). Yet they were constrained by circumstances to adopt it, for they had realised that there was no such thing as 'free' labour on the coast. Announcing that he intended to ignore the laws that forbade the employment of slaves by British subjects, the Company administrator wrote, 'the British subjects alone are deprived of the only labour available in the place for loading and discharging lighters and vessels and the working of their shambas'(8). Everyone belonged, through slavery, debt, or patronage of some other kind, to networks which defined their obligations and controlled their activities.

While such blatant violations of the law are not recorded

5. Admr. - IBEA Sec., 22 March 1893, IBEA 52 (21).
6. Letter 3(512), Precis of Mail, 12 August 1891, IBEA 52(3)
7. Letter 5/46, Precis of Mail to Mombasa, 27 Jan 1893, IBEA 52(23).
8. Mackenzie - IBEA Secretary, 12 Dec 1888, and Mackenzie - Euan-Smith, 4 Dec 1888, IBEA 1a; for labour shortage see Letter 3(524), Precis of Mail, 12 Aug 1891, IBEA 52(3).



MOMBASA AND THE SURROUNDING MAINLAND

for the period after 1895, labour remained a primary concern of the officials of the Protectorate which succeeded the Company. Apart from their own needs for labour, and those of the port, they shared a concern that the plantation economy of the coast should survive, and that new opportunities should be created within it for European planters. Officials felt that the end of slavery would cause a 'dislocation of labour'(9), for they had realised that earlier experiments in the freeing of slaves had not produced a new and willing supply of wage labour; 'most of them have returned to their masters, and others [live] by thieving, but not by working'(10).

The determined rearguard action by local officials was in one way a defence of the existing plantation economy, of the economic base of the group of wealthy Arabs who served the British as administrators. This plantation economy was thought to be reliant entirely on the labour of bought slaves. Before 1907, local officials expressed their view that slavery would in the end die a natural death, but that action to outlaw it would precipitate an economic and social crisis. One wrote that 'it is far better in every way to await patiently the inevitable collapse of this institution'(11); while another feared that on abolition 'the whole country would be overrun with loafers, thieves and prostitutes'(12). For years after the 1907 decree the end of slavery was held responsible for economic problems on the coast(13). There was a natural degree of

9. W. Hamilton (Principal Judge), Minute on Slavery, 15 May 1905, PRO CO 533 2.
10. Tritton, Sub-Commissioner,'Questions on slavery', 30 January 1903, KNA PC Coast 1/1/93.
11. p.4, Monson, Chief Secretary, 'Report on slavery and free labour in the East African Protectorate', 14 April 1903, AG/4/432.
12. p.21, Tritton, 'Questions on slavery', KNA PC Coast 1/1/93
13. p.2, Part I, 'Report on coastal production and trade', 1923, KNA PC Coast 1/1/65.

exaggeration in these reports, particularly since there were reasons to overstate the number of slaves held and the extent of the decline in cultivation caused by their manumission. Owners of slaves received compensation for each slave under the 1907 Ordinance, and inflated their claims to increase their compensation(14), while the growth of a market in mainland property encouraged others to claim that land was theirs to sell by virtue of the fact that their slaves had once cultivated it(15).

In reality, Mombasa's labour force was not completely reliant on bought slaves, though that of Malindi may have been more so. As we have already seen, migrants, converts and debtors from the Mijikenda areas already formed part of this labour force, long before slavery came to an end. The end of slavery diminished the options open to planters, increased the bargaining power of those who came to live on their land, and ultimately produced a far greater flow of Mijikenda migrants onto the land of planters, whose relationship with the landowner was generally far less close than that of those who had gone before(16). Yet it is important to see this not as a completely new departure but as a development of a pattern that had already existed for some time, and which had for Mijikenda provided important opportunities before the legal abolition of slavery.

It was the growth of new opportunities, offered by the end of slavery, that underlay the official lack of

14. Bonham-Carter - Principal Judge, 25 Nov 1908, KNA AG/4/435.
15. Hobley, PC - Chief Sec, 22 Dec 1915, KNA PC Coast 1/2/25.
16. F Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters: plantation labour and agriculture in Zanzibar and coastal Kenya, 1890-1925, New Haven 1981, p.227

enthusiasm for abolition. Abolition produced no flood of 'free' labour anxious to engage on government or European plantation work. Government and missionary funds were used in the 1890s to buy the freedom of many slaves, but the attitude of the freed slaves, many of whom moved to Mombasa, was, as noted, a great disappointment to their liberators(17). Some quickly became absorbed into the population of the town as casual labourers or hawkers, while others lived on the plantations of their ex-masters or other patrons, effectively as squatters, keeping the plantation clean and doing a little work from time to time(18). To the disappointment of their prospective employers, ex-slaves found easy access to networks of dependence, both in the town and on the mainland, that left them with no need for wage labour for Europeans. Concern over the end of slavery was not primarily a defence of Arab interests, for the colonial state in the end did little for coastal planters(19). It arose from an awareness that abolition, and competition with Arab planters for labour, would reduce rather than increase the labour supply.

European anxiety was not confined to the alleged idleness of the ex-slaves. The end of slavery did leave some land uncultivated, and inclined landowners to welcome new Mijikenda squatter tenants, permanent and temporary. Unable to enforce harsh terms on these tenants, landowners accepted arrangements which gave the tenants a generally preferable alternative to contract labour. 'Arabs were often able to get labour when noone else could. In some instances the Arabs granted "shambas" to their labourers,

17. p.18, Tritton, 'Questions on slavery', 30 Jan 1903, KNA PC Coast 1/1/93
18. Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters, p.190.
19. ibid, Introduction

who had to hand over half of the produce grown on them'(20). Small wonder, then, that officials and even the East African Standard, a newspaper then owned by an entrepreneur with coastal planting interests, had no enthusiasm for a swift end to slavery. 'It is common knowledge to those who have travelled amongst the interior peoples and coastal townspeople that both slave owners and the slaves themselves looked upon European intervention in the light of an injustice to them both', the Standard editorialised(21).

The need for new sources of labour was pressing. The advent of the Protectorate, and the construction of the railway up-country had greatly reduced the demand for long-distance porterage labour, but greatly increased the demand for other kinds of labour. Harbour traffic began to increase dramatically(22), with goods, administrative personnel and settlers to be landed. The railway, and the colonial division of East Africa, made Mombasa the principal port of Kenya and Uganda. Within Mombasa, which was the capital of the whole area until 1904 and of a large province after that, the physical apparatus of colonialism - offices, court-rooms, barracks, hospitals, godowns, marshalling yards, prisons - had to be built and serviced. As settlers moved to the highlands, so others came to the coast, with temporary enthusiasms for rubber, sisal and other crops. All this required labour, to build, dig, fetch and carry as cheaply as possible. The rubber-planting companies, in particular, required cheap labour, having chosen to plant the labour-intensive ceara variety

20. p.95, Evidence of K MacDougall, Evidence to the Native Labour Commission of 1912, Nairobi, 1913
21. East African Standard, (W), 31 March 1906.
22. Stewart, HM Commissioner - SoS, 28 April 1903, PRO CO 533 1.

of the plant in competition with the higher-yielding para of the South-East Asian plantations(23). The expedient adopted for the railway, of importing large numbers of Indian workers, was not acceptable for any employer in the longer term, as it was expensive and carried the unwelcome possibility of large-scale, permanent Indian settlement.

The increased demand applied not only to quantity, but to the quality of labour. Government departments and European plantation owners would not accept occasional labour, performed according to the inclination of the employee, a day here, a morning there, at their own pace. They wanted labour signed on a contract, working regularly to a rhythm set by the employer, at tasks the employer decided on; labour which could be disciplined for failure to perform. After some dissatisfaction with the Native Porters Regulations of 1900, since 'there is no clause under which a native can be prosecuted for running away'(24), employers were given the legal framework to enforce these demands by the 1906 Masters and Servants Ordinance. This criminalised breach of contract by the employee, establishing the willingness of the state to enforce contracts. But, while this allowed the punishment of workers who had entered into contracts and then deserted, it did not produce a new flow of local workers willing to enter contracts. Government departments, the Uganda Railway, and European plantation owners were forced to rely on workers from up-country, who walked to the coast or were brought down by recruiters(25). When private contractors were unable to obtain labour in 1906, the

23. JF Munro, 'British Rubber Companies in East Africa before the First World War', JAH XXIV, 1983, pp.369-79.
24. Currie, General Manager, Uganda Railway - Crown Advocate, 4 February 1905, KNA AG/4/1636.
25. MacGregor Ross, Director of Public Works, in Evidence to the Native Labour Commission of 1912, p. 43.

Public Works Department had to take over construction of a new rail spur in Mombasa, using imported Indian workers(26). Wages in Mombasa became, and continued to be, the highest in the Protectorate, so desperate were employers to attract labour(27).

It was not only the ex-slaves who were accused of failing to work. The Mijikenda, living in such numbers in and around Mombasa, remained apparently aloof from the new demand for labour, 'the local natives, Wagiriama and other Wanyika, supply practically no labour'(28). Certainly until the 1920s, and to a considerable extent thereafter, the Mijikenda were seen not as potential producers but as labourers, as the PC succintly explained in 1916, 'a native can generally contribute more to the wealth of the country by producing something under European supervision than by scratching the soil with a tiny hoe or digging stick'(29). Hobley later suggested that a degree of independent production within Mijikenda homesteads, sufficient to feed the plantation labour force, would be acceptable(30).

Apart from coconuts, the crops of the new European (and Indian) plantations were not food crops that were also grown by the Mijikenda - in contrast to the

26. EAS (W), 4 August and 25 August, 1906.
27. A Clayton and D Savage, Government and Labour in Kenya, 1895 - 1963, London, 1974, p. 58.
28. Pearson, DC Mombasa - Ag SNA, 17 July 1908, KNA PC Coast 1/1/138; see also eg 'Agricultural Returns', Rabai and Malindi District, Jan-July 1905, PC Coast 1/1/99; also Gilkison, Ag PC - Governor, 27 June 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/1/141.
29. Hobley, PC - DC Nyika, 17 Jan 1916, KNA PC Coast 1/1/196; also Hobley, PC - Dickson, 4 March 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/10; also Hemsted, DC Msa - PC, 12 March 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/2/10
30. Hobley, PC - Ag Chief Sec, 15 Nov 1917, KNA DC KFI 3/3

nineteenth-century plantations. Independent Mijikenda production could not now augment the output of the plantations, as it once had. The government felt that it was their responsibility to ensure that the Mijikenda should instead go out to work, as the PC informed a subordinate in 1907:

> I have the honour to inform you that that His Excellency wishes you to undertake a trip through the Nyika country and explain to the Chiefs and Elders that every endeavour must be made to induce their people to go to Mombasa and Malindi to work for the Government Departments and private individuals...There appears to be no reason why the populous Nyika country, and especially Giriama, should not furnish its share of labour(31).

In the first decade of this century, expressions of the frustration of officials and employers were increasingly directed at the Mijikenda rather than at ex-slaves. Following the failure of the previous special mission to persuade the Mijikenda to work, the Secretary of Native Affairs himself undertook a mission later in 1907 to make enquiries 'as to why the natives will not work and as to what steps could be taken to prevail upon them to do so'(32). He had no more success than his predecessor, and complaints continued. 'It is estimated that the Wadigo tribes include some 8,000 able-bodied men of whom about 700 work, the remainder being content to loaf around and live on their women'(33). Such complaints reached a peak

31. PC - MacDougall, 16 June 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/1/141
32. Hollis, SNA - Secretary, 28 Sept 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/1/130
33. EAS (D), 29 May 1912

in the evidence to the 1912 Native Labour Commission(34). Numerous theories about and solutions to this pressing problem had already been expounded by newspaper editors, district commissioners, and specially appointed government representatives(35).

Many of the theories focussed on what was felt to be a breakdown in the authority of Mijikenda elders(36) and the ease with which some Mijikenda, notably the Rabai and the Digo, could obtain cash and goods through the palm wine trade(37). Such theories did not mention the generally unpleasant nature of contract work, such as the conditions on the Mombasa water works, where the annual mortality rate among Meru workers reached 76 per 1,000 in 1912(38), or the propensity of some European employers to defraud their employees(39).

Blaming the Giriama's reluctance to work on their success as cultivators in the Trans-Sabaki area, north of Malindi, the government expelled them from there in the aftermath of the 1912 Commission, precipitating a major revolt(40). Yet removal, war, and the punitive fine imposed after the war did not force the Giriama immediately into contract labour. Like the other Mijikenda groups, their ability to avoid kinds of labour which they found unacceptable grew from their involvement in patterns of local trade, work and debt that offered them

34. Evidence of Mr Hollis, and other coastal witnesses, in Evidence to the Native Labour Commission of 1912.
35. see for example EAS (D), 4 March 1912.
36. Evidence of Mr Hobley, p.86, Evidence to the Native Labour Commission of 1912.
37. ADC Rabai - Ag PC, 16 Oct 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/1/130
38. Director, PWD - PMO, 20 June 1912, KNA MOH/1/912 .
39. 'Report on BEA Cotton and Rubber Estates', 22 Feb 1916, Ag DC Malindi, KNA PC Coast 1/9/34.
40. C. Brantley, The Giriama and Colonial Resistance in Kenya, 1800-1920, Berkeley, 1981.

alternatives to the sisal plantation and the Public Works Department.

The functioning of some of these networks is illustrated by the Mijikenda response to famine in this period. In the famines of 1898-99, 1912, and 1918-19, the government attempted to establish itself as a sort of patron, a food reserve for the Mijikenda in the manner of the traders of Mombasa(41). Supplying grain through DCs and headmen, they demanded in return labour on public works. In 1912, their demands met with a flat refusal to accept these conditions, as the DC Malindi discovered: 'They informed me frankly that they preferred to sell all their possessions for food before they would consider going out to work'(42). Undaunted, and enthusiastic to ensure a supply of workers to the private sector, the administration went further. In 1918, they announced that no relief food would be given, or even sold, to young men, who should instead find work on plantations. The plantation owners were supplied with grain from government stocks to feed these labourers(43). To some extent, the plan worked. For the duration of the famine, several plantations found themselves with large numbers of Mijikenda labourers, though they found it still difficult to control and discipline them(44). But not all the plantations, or government departments, did so well, and as soon as the

41. 'Memo of points calling for mention in question of famine relief', Crauford, 1898, KNA DC MSA 8/2; DC Malindi - Ag PC, 24 July 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/2/58; Circular No 20, Monson, Ag Chief Sec., 2 March 1918, PC Coast 1/2/6.
42. DC Malindi - PC, above; DC Msa - Ag PC, 22 Jan 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/2/58.
43. PC - Chairman, Famine Committee, 4 March 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/6; Sec., Msa Chamber of Commerce - PC, 8 March 1918; Maize Distribution Record, March 1918, both in KNA PC Coast 1/2/6.
44. Rodwell, Manager Nyali Sisal Estate - DC Msa, 21 June 1920, KNA PC Coast 1/9/43.

famine was over they found themselves again unable to recruit Mijikenda labour(45). In fact, the Mijikenda did not have to sell all their possessions for food. Government food aid was not the first or only recourse of the hungry, as Hobley noted in 1919. 'A considerable number of of Wanyika are working for daily wage [sic] on the Arab shambas at Changamwe and Kisauni'(46). This was not a new development, for a missionary wrote to the PC in 1912, 'you may be aware that the Wagiryama and Wachonyi and others are already crowding into Rabai and into the Swahili shambas near us and along the coast'(47). Migrants found casual building work in the town, as well as agricultural work outside it(48). In making such a move, migrants relied on relationships of kin, real or fictive, with townspeople.

> We went to my father's sister, who had married in Mombasa. She became a Muslim, and was married, and we went and stayed with her..[her husband] was a Giriama, a convert, like her. He was a convert, a Swahili, but a Giriama, of the Mwanduni clan.. I only met him as an mjomba, I just saw him as an mjomba, and my father's sister was taken by him, and converted(49)

The relationship between the Mijikenda and Mombasa, the networks that linked people in town to people in the hinterland, had survived the arrival of the British and the end of slavery. The changing labour market of Mombasa

45. ibid
46. PC - CNC, 5 Feb 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/2/105; also DC Rabai - Ag PC, 11 Oct 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/2/105; DC Malindi - PC, 9 Jan 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/86; Circular No 5 of 1918, PC, 28 Feb 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/6.
47. Binns, CMS - PC, 7 Oct 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/2/58.
48. Int 54a, 26c.
49. Int 54a, pp.2-3.

had strengthened these networks and provided new opportunities within them. The temporary migration of Mijikenda as a tactic of famine survival was only one aspect of these opportunities.

It was not only the demand for permanent, contracted labour that had grown. The harbour, in particular, experienced the peaks and troughs in demand for labour common to harbours everywhere. Maritime trade, in fact, was still markedly seasonal, for many of the vessels which came were sailing vessels from India and the Gulf. This aside, the demand for stevedoring and shorehandling labour varied considerably from day to day, whatever the season. So too did the demand for building labour, and for portering labour within the town. Faced with this fluctuating demand, the European-owned shipping and shorehandling firms employed all their labour on a casual basis, daily, without contracts. After 1910, this system had even greater attractions, for the amended Masters and Servants Ordinance required employers to house their contracted work-force(50). On Mombasa Island much of the land was privately owned, and land speculation had forced up the price of land in the first few years of colonial rule, so that buying land and building workers' housing was an expensive undertaking. Since prices, as well as wages, were higher in Mombasa than anywhere else in British East Africa, feeding and maintaining a permanent labour force were also unwelcome responsibilities. Indeed, other European enterprises with permanent labour, even some government departments, consistently avoided meeting the requirements of the Ordinance, which violations were treated with rather more

50. Section 26, Masters and Servants Ordinance of 1910, KNA AG/4/1612.

understanding than were those committed by employees(51).

The feeding, housing and care of much of the workforce was thus left to Mombasa's informal economy, which grew and thrived enormously as the towns population grew. Workers bought food from Hadhrami men or African women who sold small amounts of cooked food(52); they bought firewood from hawkers(53), men and women who cut wood on the mainland and brought it over to the island; and they bought water from men and women who drew the water from public wells and hawked it round the locations(54).

Some were fed and slept at houses in return for occasional household labour(55), while those more established in the town could themselves rent a room, and acquire their own hangers-on(56). Buying food, water and firewood required money, but staying and eating with someone else usually did not(57) - at least not a fixed, regular amount. The informal economy fed and sheltered casual workers, and itself provided manifold opportunities for the avoidance of contract labour. Partially supported within the home of a relative or friend, an individual could skip waged work for a while and would not starve or be homeless, or could work cutting wood, or selling water, on their own account.

> There are plenty of men but they won't work continuously - they will work for a day or two and then knock off, and they do not wish for permanent

51. Clayton and Savage, Government and Labour.., p.149.
52. Int 24a.
53. Int 25a.
54. Int 51a; DC - PC, 20 Jan 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/56.
55. Int 61a
56. Int 40a
57. Int 26b

> employment...The labour question is a difficult one. The people are too prosperous at present. There is no need for them to work, and they don't.(58)

There was no daily discipline, no legal contract backed by flogging or prison, no set time of work. On the docks at least, this casual labour also paid a far better daily rate than any other work(59).

Access to these opportunities was not free, however, for such a large and complex economy was not without organisation, of a kind. For the workers to know where to find casual work, and for them to find accommodation, even if only to sleep in a store or on a veranda, they had to know others. There had to exist networks of personal relationships which could bring together those who had something and those who needed it.

The idea of network has begun to appear in studies of African urban history(60), but generally without any real attempt being made to define the term. Mitchell, in his study of networks, suggests that they are one of a number of ways of ordering social interaction(61). In this he ranks them beside structural order, which explains behaviour in terms of position in a structure such as the family or the workplace, and categorical order which explains behaviour in terms of a social stereotype such as ethnicity or class. Ranking network alongside these other

58. Msa District AR, 1905-06, Draft version, 8 May 1906, KNA PC Coast 1/1/113.
59. F Cooper, On the African Waterfront: urban disorder and the transformation of work in colonial Mombasa, New Haven 1987
60. see for example F Cooper (ed) Struggle for the City: migrant labour, capital and the state in urban Africa, Beverley Hills 1983, Introduction
61. JC Mitchell (ed), Social Networks in Urban Situations, Manchester, 1969, Introduction.

forms seems a not entirely satisfactory approach in a context where ethnicity and family were particularly fluid, and new relationships of kin and new identities were frequently reconstructed through personal relationships. Once reconstructed, these could in turn serve as the basis for the construction of further networks, giving the individual as they did contact with numbers of others on a new level. Networks were not a separate order of relationships to ethnicity and family, rather they were the stuff of which such structures were made and remade, and these structures in turn operated as the bases for the construction of networks.

A young Mijikenda man could move to Mombasa, staying there in the house of a married female relative who had moved to the town and become a Muslim. She or her husband could find him a job with a gang of labourers whose foreman they knew as a neighbour in the town, or as a relative of the woman's husband, and within this job the young man might find himself accepted by the foreman, or by the agent or foreman for whom the first foreman worked, and adopted as the 'son' of this man, taken into his household, converted to Islam, and be given a wife by him(62). By a series of links, a series of small networks of personal contact based on a number of different structures, the migrant's membership of what Mitchell sees as categories and structures could be transformed. It is not possible to separate these ideas in this approach to network, for the network is the active embodiment of category and structure, and it can be used to change both.

In this approach, a network is not the sum total of all those whom the individual knows, as Mitchell suggests(62).

62. Int 54a.
63. Mitchell, Social Networks.., p.39.

It is rather a temporary action-set; a number of people temporarily joined for some particular reason or purpose, in the sense that Barnes uses the term network in her analysis of chains of patron-client relationships in urban Nigeria(64). An individual could become involved in networks built around very different structures, and it was this that allowed movement between the structures of the town, that allowed changes in family and ethnicity through adoption by new patrons. In the case of the migrant discussed above, membership of an initial network constructed around an actual kin relationship eventually gave access, by a number of other small networks, to a townsman, contact with whom was based on a new identity, a new structural and categorical position.

The complexity of this transition, that is the number of links the chain involved, varied considerably. Young Mijikenda migrants moving to Mombasa were quickly found places as domestic servants in the households of Arabs or Swahili by other members of their family who had preceded them to Mombasa, who were often women(65). As domestic servants they were effectively junior members of the family which took them in. The longer process described above, with more links in the chain, ended with a similar adoption, a Giriama migrant being taken fully into his Arab patron's house and eating together with him:

> We were at work, I worked for him, then he said, let me convert you to Islam. Because the wajomba then, they were, the mjomba ate at his house, and I ate apart, but when we were converted, we were together. When I was converted, I ate together with him(66).

64. S Barnes, Patrons and power: creating a political community in Metropolitan Lagos, London 1986, pp.9-11.
65. Int 51a.
66. Int 54a, p.6.

Other male Mijikenda, having initially relied on relatives or work patrons in the town for housing, later found their own accommodation, sometimes through a temporary wife(67). Such women might themselves have found rooms to rent through networks based around institutions such as spirit possession societies(68). Migrants relied for survival on contacts through neighbours(69), other members of the same dance society of which they were members(70), or people who had originally employed them as domestics(71). Through such contacts they found work and housing, and they could borrow money in times of difficulty or could effectively borrow by making irregular and unfixed payments for rent or food. In a town where everything was based on such personal contacts and knowledge, they were essential to survival.

While these networks were extremely diverse in nature, they shared a common feature - that often there came a point where membership of the institutions around which they were structured was not compatible with the demands of structures based outside the town: that is, with the obligations and demands of the homestead. For women, the simple act of moving to town without husband or father removed them from rural networks(72), for it took them out of their place in the agricultural economy and it generally meant that their father received no bride-price for them. For men, movement to the town in itself was not a rebellion, for on occasion, during famines, wholesale temporary migrations, of complete homesteads did take place. On the other hand, for an individual to move to and

67. Int 44a
68. Int 59a
69. Int 26a and b.
70. Int 67a.
71. Int CHONYI/1, CHONYI/2
72. Int 43a

survive in the town for any lengthy period of time, they had to acquire obligations and involvements which made them less reliant on, and more reluctant to contribute to, the rural economy. This happened not only with those networks that bound the migrant into a new family, which relocated their obligations and claims(73), but with individuals in looser networks(74). For some this change was expressed through the difference between the terms ndugu and jamaa. An ndugu is a relative, and in their first move to the town migrants usually relied on an ndugu(75), but through this ndugu they had access to others in the town who were their jamaa and became the jamaa of the migrant. Jamaa is a vaguer term than ndugu, indicating common membership of a community rather than claims to a kin relationship(76). McKay has noted the use of the term jamaa in Vumba to indicate those who, whatever their origins, had joined the community of the town(77). In Mombasa, jamaa were others who lived in the town, joined by participation in an urban life and the structures which ordered that life: spirit-societies, work-gangs, dance societies, living as neighbours in the same house or area. While some migrants constructed new relationships of kin by adoption in Mombasa, all became part of this community in the wider sense.

The operation of the networks of the town, the demands and obligations they imposed, and their interaction with the the categories and structures of Mombasa, can be seen clearly in the casual labour market. Mombasa's

73. Int 54a, 20c.
74. Int 44a, 26a.
75. Int 43a.
76. Int 51a.
77. McKay, 'A precolonial history of the southern Kenya coast', p.124.

society and history shaped the networks of this casual labour market, and in turn the networks shaped society.

Casual labour in Mombasa was dominated by patrons. Workers were employed in gangs, not individually, on the docks and elsewhere(78). The employers' relationship was not with the individual worker, of whom they knew nothing, but with a gang-head whose responsibility it was to find workers for their gang. It was the gang-head who decided, on the basis of personal knowledge, which workers were reliable and worked well. The gang-head picked out, from the crowd of hopefuls who gathered each morning for work, those who would work in his gang. The very term for casual labour, kibarua, had its roots in the employment of one person's slaves by another in the nineteenth-century(79). The kibarua, or 'little letter', was the note given to the slave indicating what his earnings had been, so that his master could be sure to receive his half share. To get casual work, a worker had to belong in some way to the following of a gang-head, and the head of the gang in turn had to maintain his hold over the workers in his gang. This was done both through his position as an intermediary, who could find and allocate work, and through advances to individuals, who would then be reliant on their creditor to find them work to repay their debt.

> Many men come into Mombasa from up-country seeking work, they are at once got together by certain Headmen, who in olden days were recognised

78. Cooper, On the African Waterfront.., p.37; KK Janmohamed, 'A history of Mombasa c.1895-1939; some aspects of economic and social life in an East African port town during colonial rule', PHD thesis, Northwestern, 1977, p.338.
79. Beech, 'Slavery on the East Coast of Africa'

> Caravan Leaders or engaged to recruit porters, now find their services are not required, yet still wish to live comfortably so deliberately rob these unfortunate men by taking a tax of a rupee or two from each individual when work is obtained, or if engaged for a caravan, endeavour to get the porter to demand a months wages in advance before leaving Mombasa so that they may get half the money(80).

It was not only casuals trying to find work who fell into debt. The author of the same letter noted that regular labourers for the Public Works Department were borrowing money to survive until their wages were paid:

> None of these poor people have any money, they must live somehow, and the result is that nearly every one is in debt either to traders or these so-called headmen(81)

The patrons/creditors of these workers were clearly confident of their ability to share in the earnings of their dependants. In 1902, one man was willing to pay for the privilege of supplying workers to the administration;

> Having come to know that there is no arrangement from the Government at the Government wood store near the Fish Market to supply coolies for carrying wood from there to the town and that this work is done by common Negroes wandering in the streets I must respectfully beg to submit my tender for supplying coolies...I shall pay monthly or yearly in advance the fee for the contract the ..

80. Director of Govt Transport - SNA, 16 August 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/1/130.
81. ibid.

Government will order me(82)

A development in new circumstances of the networks of patronage by which owners or patrons shared in the earnings of their dependants, this system long dominated the hiring of casual labour, and particularly port labour, in Mombasa. So successful was it as a means of organising casual labour that Smith Mackenzie, the shipping line, were the only European concern to be satisfied with the labour situation in 1912, reporting that their workers were 'recruited in Mombasa by their own headmen'(83). In 1917, when the ability of these headmen to control labour was the subject of some displeasure, the PC noted that

> ..a considerable proportion of the labour was not free to engage itself in the open market, as Asiatic agents still hold large numbers of men in gangs and withhold them from the labour market until some firm makes it worth their while to release them for work. This grip over gangs is obtained by a system of advances and illicit rewards; by keeping the hamals in debt they cease to be free agents and have to obey the behests of the labour agents(84).

It has been argued that a casual labour system relies on a chronic oversupply of labour(85), and in discussing a similar system of casuality and reliance on foremen in the London docks in the 1880s, Stedman Jones has characterised

82. Mohamed bin Nahman - Ag Sub-Commr, Mombasa, 6 Oct 1902, KNA PC Coast 1/1/94.
83. Evidence of Mr Denne, Evidence to the Native Labour Commission of 1912, p.95
84. PC - Chief Sec, 9 Feb 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/42.
85. G Stedman Jones, Outcast London; a study in the relationship between classes in Victorian society, Oxford, 1971, p.67.

it as a 'tyranny', with casual labour an unwelcome imposition(86). This was not the case in Mombasa. There was a general oversupply of labour, but on a day-to-day basis there were shortages that kept wages high. The unloading of ships at Mombasa was often considerably delayed for want of labour(87), because the high wages and lack of regular discipline meant that workers could and did work only occasionally. Casual labour was a sought-after alternative to other kinds of work - better the tyranny of the casual foreman than that of the Masters and Servants Ordinance - but this did not mean there was a surplus of labour on any given day, since dock labour was so popular precisely because it did not require regularity. In one way the gang-heads limited the casual labour force, because an individual had to know them to work, but on the other hand they guaranteed that at least some workers would be obtained, through their claims of debt and patronage on potential workers. As the demand for casual labour at the port grew, from scores to hundreds each day, it reached a scale at which personal relationships between a few gang-heads and each individual labourer were impossible. A hierarchy of networks developed, with the head of the smaller network in a personal relationship to the overall head, and those within the smaller network linked in different ways to the head of their little gang. The gang leaders were known as serangs or serahangis, the leaders of the smaller gangs as tindals(88).

Reliant as they were on the serangis, workers tended to stay with the one serangi who knew them - even if this

86. ibid, pp.81-82.
87. PC - Chief Sec., 1 Aug 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/42.
88. Int 71b.

meant that on occasion they failed to find work(89). Disputes did arise between serangis over workers(90), but the relationship between serangis and between workers and serangis seems to have been remarkably free of disruption, if inequitable, and one informant suggested that the serangis exactions from his gang were fairly haphazard:

> It was up to you. You see, if you do him right, he'll see you right. He doesn't ask, but you feel yourself, this one, I must give him a cigarette..some days the serangi has no money, he'll come to you, he'll tell you, give me two or three shillings, I'll get it back to you(91)

These headmen may have obtained labour for the shipping companies, but their activities were less acceptable to other Europeans. Controlling casual labour in the town, they offered alternatives considerably more attractive than were those elsewhere in the colonial economy. The local newspaper, which in this period was very sympathetic to the interests of European planters, constantly vilified the 'rascally Swahili crimps'(92), who tempted away labourers signed up to plantation owners, able to do so because of the 'ridiculous ease with which money can be earned doing odd jobs in Mombasa'(93). Mombasa's casual labour market was clearly seen as a threat to other employers.

The dock labour force involved the largest, most complex networks in Mombasa. There were many more smaller

89. Int 26a.
90. Int 25a.
91. Int 20c, p.8.
92. EAS (D), 29 May 1912.
93. EAS (W), 27 Oct 1906; also EAS (D), 20 April 1912.

networks, which made life possible. Some of the smaller networks were also associated with work - the public boats which carried passengers to and from steamers anchored in the harbour were rowed not by their owners but by the younger relatives of their owners, or by Mijikenda migrants to the town who were converted to Islam by the boat owners, entering into a relationship with them that was expressed in terms of kinship(94). This family relationship, however, did not result in a very equitable distribution of the takings, as one man explained of his uncle's boat:

> In the boat, in that rowing boat, I used to get pesa nane [one eighth of a rupee] for a day. Or some days our bosses would come visiting, [then] they would leave us to finish off, well, we'd steal a shilling each, half a rupee. Steal it. If we were asked we'd just say we took pesa nane...they were bastards(95).

This was around 1918, and in dock labour at this time, a day's work would have brought in two and a half rupees. As with the need to pay back serangis, this demonstrates that these networks did allow workers to escape contracts, but they also controlled and restricted workers in other ways, keeping them in one occupation and excluding them from another. These networks allowed a different sort of exploitation, by those more established in the town, or with greater access to capital, rather than by Europeans with greater access to the legal machinery of the state.

It was networks like these, established on the bases of

94. Int 44a.
95. Int 49a, p.4.

actual kinship or of a fictitious kinship expressing a sort of adoption of the junior by the senior partner, that allowed many Mijikenda to come to Mombasa and survive there. Much of Mombasa's work force in these early years was made up of ex-slaves, and the ties of patronage surrounding these workers in particular fostered the development of the serangi system, since ex-slaves were often very much still under the influence of their former masters(96). Yet ex-slaves were by no means the only people with access to the complex patterns of patronage and dependence in Mombasa. Nineteenth-century trade and famine, and the resulting movement of many individual Mijikenda to Mombasa as wives, concubines and dependants of townspeople, had given many Mijikenda kin in the town(97). Through initial claims of kin on these people, Mijikenda migrants had contacts with others in the town, and access to the networks of personal contact through which casual labour was recruited. The initial introduction, through a network based on kin, was easier for Mijikenda than it was for migrants from up-country who had few such contacts in the town, and so Mijikenda had privileged access to the casual occupations which many observers reported to be the particular province of the 'Swahili', as they called the growing and heterogeneous population of Mombasa(98). As colonial officials noted at the time, and as Mijikenda remember now, the worst jobs in Mombasa, such as sweeping and cleaning for the Conservancy Department, were done by up-country workers(99), known

96. See the Criminal Appeal No 7 of 1922, Mombasa Supreme Court, KNA DC MSA 8/3; see also the discussion in KNA AG/4/430
97. Int 5c, 55a, 40a.
98. See p.66, Political Record Book, 1913, KNA DC MSA 8/2; C Eliot, The East African Protectorate, London, 1905, p.113
99. Evidence of MacGregor Ross, Evidence to the Native Labour Commission.., p.43.

derisively by other townspeople as machura, the 'frogs'(100). Yet the networks of the town did not exclude or include people on the basis of their origins. Up-country workers too could be adopted(101), or find their way into other networks of the labour market, such as the dance societies(102), and Mijikenda had easier access to casual labour and to housing simply because they had more contacts and relatives in the town on whom they could call for support. Among the Mijikenda, some groups seem to have had easier access than others to the networks of the town - the Digo more so than the Giriama, for example, while it was the Giriama who took more advantage of the opportunities offered by coastal land-owners north of Mombasa than did any other group.

While many Mijikenda women who came to Mombasa survived through their sexuality, as wives or concubines, or as prostitutes(103), they could also work as casual labourers(104), water carriers(105) or food sellers(106), sometimes combining these activities with life as a concubine(107). They too relied at least initially on networks to which they had access through family and clan(108).

Supported by these networks, and not generally paying rent, Mijikenda in Mombasa could live by the occasional day's labour here and there, as porters or hawkers, or could make a small living out of petty thieving(109). Some

100. Int 40b.
101. Int 72a.
102. Int 61a
103. Int 34a, 59a.
104. EAS (W), 25 Aug 1906.
105. Int 51a.
106. Int 24a.
107. Int 24a.
108. Int 59a, 24a.
109. Letter, EAS, (W) 20 Jan 1906.

pursued more specialised trades, selling medicines and performing cures among Mijikenda and Twelve Tribes Swahili, their customers guided to them by the interlinking networks of the town(110). Living in this way, they would not starve if they missed work, nor would they be homeless, and this gave them the freedom to live by casual labour, to avoid contracts. Meanwhile, in the hinterland around Mombasa, new networks continued to be created.

The continued activities of the Swahili and Arab planters and traders of the Mwakirunge, Kidutani, Junju and Mtongwe areas showed the resilience of some planters despite the end of slavery. Networks of indebtedness gave them as firm a hold on the products of others' labour as did the formal institution of slavery. In these areas, they had never cultivated much land directly with slave labour, and after the end of slavery they concentrated on buying and selling the crops of others(111), giving advances for future crops in time of hardship, at terms very advantageous to themselves. Mijikenda were not producing specifically for the market, for all the items of trade were foodstuffs which they grew for themselves - maize, and coconuts, and later also rice and bananas. Anxious to purchase goods from the traders, they would sell too much of their grain, and find themselves buying it back later to eat, at twice the price for which they had sold it. Some sold their seed corn, and had to borrow to buy it back again at planting time(112).

110. Int 20c.
111. Int 44a, 38a; also Civil Case No. 60 of 1913, Msa High Court, KNA PC Coast 1/10/269; and Ag DC Kilifi - SCC, 10 August 1922, KNA PC Coast 1/14/127.
112. p. 8, 'Report on food production', March 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/1; and DC Kilifi - Ag PC, 17 June 1920, KNA PC Coast 1/19/1.

As traders, these planters also gave advances on other goods to be delivered, such as copra or timber. When the debtor failed to deliver on time, as generally happened, the trader could take the case to one of the Muslim courts which operated in Mombasa and Malindi, under British authority. The defendant would rarely appear in court, the case would go against them and a punitive fine would be added to their debt, giving the trader an enormous claim on any future crops or earnings(113). Such debts were not generally meant to be called in completely, but to establish the trader's right to purchase the defendant's crops at a cheap rate. In all this, Arabs and Swahili were increasingly displaced, by better-capitalised Indian traders, as a result of government policies(114).

Such traders also acted as money-lenders, lending money to Mijikenda who wished to afford a bride-price(115) or pay the taxes imposed by the administration in the hope that they would force Africans to go out to work(116). Such debts were usually secured on the fruit trees of the debtor, the product of the trees being the property of the mortgagee for the duration of the debt(117). Once contracted, such debts were often not repaid but were rather used as the basis for further borrowing(118). Such arrangements did cause problems for the mortgagee, too, for the product of the trees was theirs legally, but could easily be stolen, particularly where they themselves did not live near it. Some installed

113. DC Malindi - PC, 22 Sept 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/19/1
114. See Chapter 3.
115. See p.137, of notes written in 1913, KNA DC MSA 1/2.
116. Int 54a.
117. eg case of Magwayi, DC Msa - PC, 2 Oct 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/11/267.
118. Int 26c.

plantation managers of their own, who were themselves Mijikenda clients, converted to Islam(119).

North of Mombasa, such indebtedness, and mortgage, spread into the ridge beyond the creek-heads where the traders had begun. South of Mombasa, there are reports of mortgages in Tiwi and Vanga(120), and by around 1914, Muslim traders and money-lenders were active in Kinango, west of the Shimba hills(121).

By contrast to these planter-traders, those planters who owned land which had been largely slave farmed, mostly on the land closer to the coast, at Changamwe, Kisauni, Utange, Mtwapa and Kanamai, had great difficulty in maintaining their control of its product on the end of slavery(122). They had lost what hold they had over its inhabitants, and during the colonial period much of this land came to be settled by Mijikenda migrants, particularly Giriama, some of whom came as casual agricultural labour in times of hardship and then settled permanently as squatters. They paid no rent but acknowledged their obligation to the owner of the land by harvesting nuts for him, and earning money by harvesting nuts for others(123). The labour of these tenants, and the occasional labour of daily casuals, was not sufficient to maintain large-scale grain cultivation, but did allow a somewhat lackadaisical harvesting of coconuts. Even this was threatened by the ease with which coconuts could be stolen from the trees of an absentee landholder, a problem

119. Int 20c
120. Diary of Tour, Ag DC Vanga, 9 Aug 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/1
121. Int 63a.
122. Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters.., Introduction.
123. Int 17b, 54a.

against which legislation proved ineffectual(124). In Changamwe, and in the plantations of coconut palms that still stood on Mombasa island at this time, landowners turned their palms over to producing palm wine(125). Tapping a palm for wine involves attaching a container to it for a day at a time, making theft rather easier to detect(126). Squatters on these and nearby plantations, particularly Rabai and Digo, found another kind of casual work - as tappers for these landlords(127).

Some Swahili and Arab landowners did continue grain farming around Kanamai and Mtwapa, share-cropping with gangs of Giriama labour. These groups, whole homesteads of men, women and children, did not settle but came for a season's labour on the coast lands, establishing relationships with particular land-owners(128). This pattern was also noted in Malindi(129). For some, such relationships, like those of debt described above, gave them access to networks in the town. They might find housing or work in the town through the landowners, and might acquire kin in the town through the marriage of a female relative to a planter(130). In these areas too, some traders established themselves solely as traders without any attempt to possess land or produce. They made a good living, better perhaps than that of the actual planters, by trading in the produce of other landowners and of their squatters, a trade in which they always sold for at least twice the price for which they bought(131).

124. See Coconut Trade Ordinance of 1915, and Hobley, Memo, June 1915, in KNA AG/4/2380.
125. Int 61a.
126. Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters.., p.185.
127. Int 43a, 36a.
128. Int 70a.
129. DC Malindi - PC, 9 Jan 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/86
130. Int 54a.
131. Int 53a.

The term generally used to describe such patrons, acquired through networks of rural trade and production, was tajiri, meaning literally 'wealthy person', a term with manifold implications of obligation and reliance, obligations which went both ways. The tajiri had a claim on the product and the time of his, or her, dependant, but also had a financial obligation to the dependant(132). They might also recognise an obligation to house and assist their dependant if they came to Mombasa(133).

There existed another way of acquiring a tajiri, again involved with local trade. Mombasan traders travelled in the hinterland, acquiring goods, but Mijikenda also went to Mombasa. Those who got their goods as far as Changamwe, Mtongwe or Likoni could transport them to the island by the public ferries, run under licence from the government by Indian monopolists(134). The tariffs set on these boats reveal a little of the kind of goods which Mombasa drew from its local hinterland - items from up-country crossed not by ferry but on the trains over the rail bridge which was closed to other traffic(135). Charges were set for palm-thatch, grass, ivory, mangoes, betel, tobacco, coconuts, grain, beans, sesame, rubber, fish, palm wine, firewood, goats, donkeys and bullocks(136).

Many Mijikenda had difficulty in bringing goods to these ferries. For them, there were other trade routes, around the creeks of the coast. From the north, the trade routes led from the Chonyi area to Kidutani, on Mtwapa creek; from Ribe, Jibana and Kambe they led to Mwakirunge; and from Rabai they led down to Jomvu, on Tudor Creek. From

132. Int 26c.
133. Int 44a
134. See the contents of KNA AG/4/3599
135. Dalal - Crown Advocate, 7 Aug 1906, KNA AG/4/3599
136. Indenture, 1 Oct 1903, KNA AG/4/3599

Duruma they led to Port Reitz and Changamwe. From these points, goods were carried by boat to the customs house in the old harbour of Mombasa, and sold there to the shopkeepers and hawkers of Mombasa. Around these routes there developed an elaborate set of networks and ties of patronage.

For the Mijikenda homestead heads of Ribe and Jibana, head-loading their goods down to Mwakirunge required several journeys, reliant as they were on the household labour of their wives and sons(137). At Mwakirunge, there were a number of boat-owners, Swahili or Arabs, and so a homestead head would have an arrangement with one in particular, who would store his goods for the day or two it would take to collect them, and then would ship them(138). Mwakirunge creek is navigable only at high tide, and if possible the boats would leave on the early morning tide, to reach the port by nine in the morning. If not, they would leave in the evening and the crews and the owners of the produce would sleep the night at Kisauni, near the ferry landing, before sailing on in the morning. At the port, some of the homestead heads had particular merchants to whom they would always sell their goods, who would buy from them even when the market was glutted. The seller could then pay the boat-owner the fare. Sometimes, the producers would not accompany their goods to the market, but would rely on the boat-owner to sell their goods. Living some of the time in Mwakirunge, and some in Mombasa, marrying in Mwakirunge, the boat-owners, several of whom were of slave origins(139), established special relationships with producers, and even the crews of their boats might be dependants as much as

137. Int 21b.
138. Int 40b.
139. Int 20c.

employees. Some Mijikenda, moving to Mombasa, were able to turn to the merchants who had bought their goods as tajiris. One was set up as a fruit hawker in the town by his tajiri, selling the products he had once grown, and by conversion to Islam turning his bond to his patron into one of fictive kinship, changing the basis of the network which bound them together(140).

Through a variety of different means, then, the early years of the twentieth century saw the development and growth of the networks that linked the people of Mombasa to the Mijikenda of the surrounding mainland. These were not, however, the only networks of local trade that gave the Mijikenda sources of income outside of contract work. In particular, the palm wine trade between different Mijikenda groups continued(141). Sometimes this involved cash, but Duruma and Giriama, who mainly inhabit areas where palm wines do not grow well, would also bring grain to the Rabai and Digo areas to exchange for palm wine, the rate usually being a straight exchange of amounts - one gourd of palm wine for one of maize(142). Mijikenda also went to the coast for palm wine, trading or working for it:

> ..a few of the Arabs of Malindi and Roka and the Swahilis of Changamwe refuse to sell palm wine to the Giriama until they have performed a certain amount of work in their shambas, or pay them in palm

140. Int 21b.
141. Hollis, SNA, Evidence to the Native Labour Commission of 1912; ADC Rabai - PC, 16 Oct 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/1/130. For the nineteenth-century trade, see T. Herlehy 'Ties that bind: palm wine and blood-brotherhood at the Kenya coast during the 19th century', IJAHS, XVII, 1984, pp.285-308.
142. Int 32a.

wine for work done(143)

There was also a periodic demand for labour in cultivation, in all Mijikenda areas. Usually the work of young men, this generally involved clearing and breaking new ground for another homestead, an area of ground being set as the allotted task with a reward of grain, cash or palm wine(144). A mobility within and between Mijikenda groups also persisted. Some Giriama refugees from the 1913 expulsions, having lost their homes, crops and livestock, joined other homesteads, helping them herd and farm their land, and so establishing themselves in a new area, albeit as subordinates. In this, as in movement to Mombasa, ties of marriage were the start of the relationship; they established the initial network.

> We stayed at the homestead of some people just near here. For they were people, neighbours, our elders took a child from there, and so we came to them then we were newcomers. When we were established, we looked for a place where we would live, us(145).

Yet the networks based on trade to Mombasa offered something which those of trade between Mijikenda rarely could - credit. Such networks were all, in a way, founded on the access of Mombasan traders to capital and to markets, and they tended to be characterised by dependency and debt on the side of the Mijikenda. Though most officials made it clear that the role of the Mijikenda was to labour for others, not to produce, still the Mijikenda were on occasion castigated by others for their apparent lack of response to the opportunities to market their produce: 'the Wadigo natives of the district do not want

144. Int 66a, 40a.
145. Int 46a, p.1; see also Int 45a.

to trade, and they are too lazy to bring comestibles up to the camps for sale'(146). The reason for this may lie partly in indebtedness. Advances and indebtedness limited the ability of Mijikenda to sell grain. Forced to sell to a single buyer they had little control over price and thus little motivation to produce for the market. Advances and debt were also a feature of the trade in gathered items, such as gum copal(147) and rubber(148), as well as of that in produced copra(149),and inevitably they limited the returns to Mijikenda from such trade.

Yet the networks imposed obligations on the Mombasans too. Mombasan traders, Swahili, Arab and Indian, were themselves generally in debt. Some of them tried to sell to others the trees or land mortgaged to them(150), and the dramatic collapse of a number of Indian financial empires between 1912 and 1925 revealed the financial vulnerability of such traders(151).

Moreover, the iniquity of these debt arrangements should not be over-estimated. Traders could not force their debtors to produce for the market, and foreclosing a mortgage on a dependant's palm trees would be of little value if there were then no one to guard or harvest the nuts. Most of all, these networks gave the Mijikenda independence from other claims on their time and labour. Able to borrow money, they were not immediately

146. Linnell, Ag Resident Eng, Shimba Hills water works - Ag DPW, 1 July 1913, KNA MOH/1/1186.
147. 'Report on the local prices of gum copal', ADC Rabai, 6 Dec 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/2/61.
148. Tritton- HM Commissioner, 20 Jan 1903, KNA PC Coast 1/1/93
149. Rabai Sub-district Annual report, 1911-12, KNA PC Coast 1/1/185.
150. See Entry 443A of 1905, in Transactions Register A19.
151. Janmohamed, 'A History of Mombasa, c.1895-1939..', p. 169.

forced into wage labour by tax demands or by the need for a bride price. They had an established market for their goods, access to coastal land as squatters, and to work on a very casual basis for their landlords or others. Those living outside the coastal lowlands had the opportunity for temporary settlement and share-cropping on the coast in time of famine, so that government attempts to force them into regular labour during famines could be resisted.

It is not surprising, then, that it was in this period that the Singwaya story, still at this time a claim to origins shared by some of the Twelve Tribes of the Swahili, became common. It was not just, as Morton has suggested, a justification of pawning(152); it was a projection back into history of shared interests and the possibility of a shared identity, a historical basis for a series of economic arrangements that had come to be even more important, and to require defending, in the new context of British rule.

The link with the Swahili was explicit in the Singwaya stories of this period: the Mijikenda came with, or even were led by, the Swahili(153). This is in direct contrast to those modern versions in which the Swahili are, if mentioned, seen as Mijikenda who stayed in Mombasa and forgot their real identity(154). Morton's association of the Singwaya story with a very particular set of circumstances, the relationship between the Giriama and some Arabs of Malindi, notably one Fadhili bin Omari, has

152. Morton, 'The Shungwaya myth..'
153. 'Notes on the origins and movements of the Wachonyi and Wajibana', Attached, Kilifi Station Diary, March 1925. KNA PC Coast 1/1/443.
154. Int 5b.

been challenged as not accounting for the rapidity with which the story spread or for the enthusiasm of the Mijikenda themselves for the story(155). There is evidence that Fadhili's association with the Giriama was even closer than Morton suggested, for in 1917, after the Giriama expulsion from north of the Sabaki, Fadhili attempted to organise a legal action on behalf of the Giriama to prove their right to live in the Trans-Sabaki(156). Traditions of the closeness of Giriama, Swahili, and Arabs, not to mention claims to an origin north of the Sabaki, flourished under these conditions. Yet there is no need to attribute the story to such a precise event. Rather, Singwaya at this time was an expression of an alliance, or rather a multitude of alliances. These were of advantage to the Mijikenda, who found through them alternatives to subordination as wage labourers within the colonial economy, and to Swahili and Arabs, whose access to the land, products and labour of the Mijikenda came through these alliances. The utility of such alliances, and the meaning of Singwaya, was to change, but the Mijikenda retained the story.

To talk of the Mijikenda, though, is too simple, for we have already seen that the interests of all members of Mijikenda groups were not identical. The relationship between the Mijikenda and Mombasa, and in particular the migration of individual Mijikenda men and women to Mombasa can only be understood in the context of the Mijikenda homestead and the tensions within it. Migration to work in Mombasa, even as a casual, was not a product of straightforward computations of the returns to be gained

155. N Chittick, 'The Book of the Zanj and the Mijikenda', IJAHS, IX, 1, 1976, pp.68-73.
156. p.2, Minutes of Baraza held at Kakoneni Station, 21 Feb 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/1.

from homestead production as against those from wage labour, as migrancy elsewhere in Kenya has been explained(157). Migration was not, of course, solely a product of tensions within the homestead economy, but the impact of other forces, such as tax, was mediated by the structure of the homestead(158).

Within the networks of kin and clan around the homestead, an individual's membership was expressed through labour, but also through contributions to the homestead economy. This involved not only attempts to save up bridewealth, but contributions to the social expenses which membership of the homestead and, to an extent, the clan, involved. Some Mijikenda homesteads seem to have had an infinitely elastic need for money, for the system of double funerals for the dead (the second funeral being held when there were sufficient funds for it) meant that any new income could immediately be used(159). The use of the homestead's resources was up to the head of the homestead, not to the person who had initially earned those resources, and continued involvement in the networks of rural kin thus placed almost insatiable demands on the earnings of Mijikenda workers. It seems that those whose natural fathers had died and who lived in homesteads headed by uncles or other relatives found their share of the homestead's resources particularly unsatisfactory(160). Reliant for food, clothes, and above all for bridewealth on others, they resented what they saw as inadequate provision.

157. S Stichter, Migrant labour in Kenya: capitalism and African response, London, 1982
158. idem, Migrant Laborers, Cambridge, 1985, p.6.
159. p.274, JB Griffiths, 'Glimpses of a Nyika tribe (Waduruma)' JRAI LXV, 1935, pp.267-296; Int 69a
160. Int 44a, 13a.

Mombasa, in this context, could serve as a kind of refuge. Whereas other urban spaces and places of employment in Kenya at this time provided little opportunity for long-term settlement, Africans could move to and stay in Mombasa with little fear of expulsion. Mijikenda could move to and stay in Mombasa to escape the demands of the homestead, and they could live and marry in Mombasa to emphasise their independence from the homestead head. To an extent it allowed them to take control of their earnings.

On the other hand, life in Mombasa was not without restrictions or obligations, and migrants' control of their earnings was not complete. To survive in the town, migrants had to participate in the institutions of the town around which the daily networks of survival were built. This participation, brought demands on their wages from serangs, concubines and town associations such as the beni dance societies(161). As such it imposed obligations not compatible with their position in the homestead economy; with remittance of earnings and regular returns to the homestead. Such demands were less onerous than were those of the homestead, but the two could not go together. Migrants' obligations and claims shifted from those based on hinterland networks of kin and clan to those established in the town through work and housing. Those who migrated to Mombasa temporarily, with all or most of their homestead, to survive famine periods, did not become so involved, and they were excluded from the docks, the most lucrative form of casual labour. When Hobley noted of dock labour in 1918 that 'Raw Nyika labour which may drift into the town owing to a lack of food is of no value for

161. see Chapter 6, below.

this work'(162), he was in effect recognising and acquiescing in the exclusion of such labour from dock-work, despite the drastic labour shortage of the time. Such temporary migrants worked instead on Arab and Swahili plantations around Mombasa or as casual building labour(163).

Mijikenda migrants who obtained work in the higher paying types of casual labour became townspeople in order to find this work. Describing this movement now, Mijikenda refer to it as being 'lost'(164) - a term used not only by elders in the rural areas but also by younger men in the town, who insist that they have retained their identity, have not become lost. This becoming lost was not a matter of forgetting or denying origins completely, for the 'lost' often helped members of their family who came to the island(165). Rather, these people had become lost to the redistributive networks of the hinterland.

The conflicts engendered by this 'loss', and by the resistance to the control of elders and of the state that it engendered, were played out partly through the changing meaning and implications of the term 'Swahili'. The history of this elastic category tells us much about movement to the town and about the attitudes of older Mijikenda and British officials to it.

It is clear that in Mombasa today the term 'Swahili' has many meanings, several of which may be operable for the same informant in different contexts. A Swahili is

162. PC - Chairman, Famine Cttee, 14 Feb 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/6.
163. PC - CNC, 5 Feb 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/2/105; Int 45a, 40a
164. Int 40a, 4c
165. Int 5c, 26b, 40a.

used by some to describe any Muslim(166), by others to describe a town-dweller(167). For the Ribe and Digo, the Swahili are Ribe and Digo who have decided to live in the town and forget or deny their other identity(168), while some Mijikenda now living in Mombasa define themselves as Duruma, Jibana, or whatever, but also as Swahili. Moreover, they do not simply call themselves Swahili, but specify which of the 'Twelve Tribes' they belong to(169), while insisting that they are still Mijikenda as well. Other members of the Twelve Tribes, overtly trying to establish their rights as a 'tribe' like any other, insist that to be a Swahili one has to belong to certain clans, that there are descent groups involved, and that the Mijikenda are not Swahili(170). There are many kinds of Swahili, but the implication from Mijikenda sources identifies the Swahili as the population of the town, of mixed origins but specifically of the town. Moreover, though some Mijikenda claim a Swahili identity in some circumstances, usually as a prelude to a claim to the original ownership of Mombasa or the surrounding area(171), the term usually carries a sense of disapproval. 'A Swahili is someone who doesn't go home, someone who has got a bit lost'(172). A 'Swahili', for many, is someone sly and deceptive(173).

'Swahili' also came to have less than complimentary implications when used by Europeans. During the Company period, and the early years of the protectorate, Swahili had not been a term of opprobrium. The Company decided

166. Int 21b
167. Int 5c
168. Int 40b
169. Int 18a
170. Int 61b
171. Int 5b, 17b
172. Int 4c, p.2.
173. Int 18a.

that 'Swahilis' would make the best policemen(174); missionary scholars hobnobbed with literati of the Twelve Tribes, impressed by the existence of a literary Swahili culture(175); and the contrast between the coastal towns and the hinterland was seen by Europeans as one between civilisation, albeit a rather decadent one, and barbarism. The fond recollection of the Swahili as trusty policemen and porters endured into the Protectorate(176), partly perhaps as a corollary of the sympathetic attitude taken by Hardinge, the first Commissioner, to the Arab population of the coast(177). Eliot, the second High Commisioner of the Protectorate, wrote that the Swahili were distinguished from up-country Africans by 'civilisation and intelligence'(178), and Stigand, in his florid description of the coast, wrote of the towns as 'this thin line of civilisation..unable to cope with the hordes of savages of the interior'(179). In 1906, the Collector angrily noted that the Public Works Department was leaving its trolleys in the control of 'wachenzis' (sic), that is Africans who were not Swahili, and he demanded that Swahilis be given this responsible position(180).

But as early as 1906, the word Swahili was being used in a new way. The perception that Africans in this urban culture must be immoral and decadent, as a corollary of their civilisation, came to predominate over the view of

174. Letter 5/76, Precis of mail to Mombasa, 24 Feb 1893, IBEA 53(25).
175. See the references to Taylor in J Knappert, Four Centuries of Swahili Verse, London 1979.
176. EAS (W), 14 April 1906
177. Salim, Swahili-speaking peoples.., Chapter 2
178. Eliot, The East African Protectorate, p.112.
179. CH Stigand The Land of Zinj, London 1966 (first 1913), p.2
180. Collector, Msa - Ag Sub-Commr, 12 Nov 1906, KNA PC Coast 1/1/113

them as potential allies. Even in remarking on Swahili civilisation, Eliot had commented that 'their honesty is rarely above suspicion'(181). The Swahili were metamorphosing in the minds of Europeans, official and unofficial, changing from civilised, stable allies into the dregs of Mombasa. The newspaper started to refer to Mombasan criminals and labour touts as 'Swahilis' or 'Swahili rogues'(182), a habit which was taken up by the police, the Inspector-General commenting in 1906 that 'Of the criminal class the worst are the Indians and the Swahilis'(183). These accusations of immorality, the association of the word 'Swahili' with a lazy and criminal population that defied regulation, came to dominate European attitudes to the Swahili. The resulting outpouring of bile was venomous indeed. A European woman observer wrote in 1910 of the Swahili that, 'their favourite occupations are eating, sleeping and loafing about the bazaar'(184). In about 1920, a visitor was told that Swahili meant 'those who cheat all alike'(185). It seems to have been the idea of African decadence and decline in an urban environment that underlay this view. Ainsworth-Dickson, an official who had been alone among officials in his enthusiasm for Mijikenda farming during the First World War, when he endeavoured to encourage Mijikenda production through the Food Production Mission of 1917(186), and who happily cooperated with Arab and Twelve Tribes elders in administration,

181. Eliot, The East African Protectorate, p.113
182. See eg EAS, (D), 14 May 1912, 20 April 1912.
183. Police Annual Report, 1905-06, in Donald, IGP - HM Commr, 10 May 1906, PRO CO 533 14; also see ADSP - PC, 24 March 1910, KNA PC Coast 1/1/159.
184. E Younghusband, Glimpses of East Africa and Zanzibar, London, 1910, p.33.
185. H. Norden, White and Black in East Africa, London, 1924, p. 43.
186. 'Report of the Food Production Mission', March 1918, Ali bin Salim and T Ainsworth-Dickson, KNA PC Coast 1/2/1.

nonetheless regarded Mombasa's Swahili, and particularly the more recent immigrants, with some contempt, as his comment when DC of Mombasa in 1923 suggests:

> The Swahili, lethargic and thriftless, is a striking instance of self-deception. The possessor of a bare mud hut, a bed and a faithless wife, he sees himself the lavish host of a hundred guests and the envied of men[sic](187)

Presumably worried that he had not made himself clear, Ainsworth-Dickson later described Swahili youth as 'a generation of drunken, dangerous wasters'(188).

This hostility grew out of the ease with which Africans could become Swahili and so join this unregulated urban population. In 1914, population figures for Mombasa District included the category 'Swahilis including residents of almost every tribe in Africa'. They were the vast majority of the population(189). It was an admission of the administration's inability to differentiate, classify and regulate the population of Mombasa. Mombasa's population was growing, and many of those who came to Mombasa identified themselves as Swahili. In the town, they evaded some of the constraints which the colonial state sought to place on them, and avoided the jobs which European employers wanted them to do.

For Africans, becoming Swahili was an important way into the economy of the town. There was no separate, identifiable 'underclass' in Mombasa at this time. Although the use of the term Swahili soon came to be

187. p.2, Mombasa District AR, 1923, KNA DC MSA 1/3.
188. p.6, Mombasa District AR, 1925, KNA DC MSA 1/3.
189. Population estimates in KNA PC Coast 1/1/328.

contested, the ability to absorb strangers which it offered produced a society which was far from egalitarian but in which class was not an organising factor. The casual labourers of Mombasa generally drew no subsistence from the rural homestead, but this did not mean they were without access to land, for the island itself was partly open land at this time, and many of the Swahili lived on the mainland fringe at Changamwe, Kisauni and Likoni. Migrants to Mombasa had abandoned their rural homestead, but they were not a 'proletariat', for the term underestimates their options, the complex nature of control within the labour market and the possibilities it held for individuals to seek independent employment, and the constraints which debt and patronage placed on these options.

This applied not only to Mijikenda who joined the networks of the town through family members or patrons who lived there, but also to some others who came to the town, walking the hundreds of miles from the Highlands, or brought down to work on plantations after recruitment up-country. Many such workers, alone and without money in the town, or faced with months of hard, unpleasant labour, willingly deserted and placed themselves in the hands of self-appointed headmen, who lent them money and found them work(190). The headman took a cut, of course, but this was for most preferable to the plantation. Within this new network, many identified themselves as Swahili, an identification usually accompanied by at least a nominal conversion to Islam. This was not only an expression of some sort of allegiance to the headman. Equipped thus with a new name and ethnic identity, workers were usually untraceable, beyond the reach of the aggrieved employer

190. EAS, (D), 20 April 1912, and (W) 27 Oct 1912.

from whom they had deserted(191). Some could use the anonymity of the town to pursue a modest career in desertion:

> Mombasa affords a ready asylum for the professional contract breaker, who at Mombasa gets an advance on his engagement to work here, and returns without fulfilling it(192)

Mombasa provided a refuge not only for contract-breakers, but for tax-evaders. The administration was unable to effectively tax the population of the island in their homes, and in 1912 abandoned the collection of poll-tax there(193). Attempts to carry out a census and begin again the collection of tax in 1913 were frustrated by the nature of housing in Mombasa; even where house-owners could be identified and taxed their dependants, relatives and other members of the household were a different matter. The PC, Hobley, wrote that 'there are in most houses adult lodgers who are legally liable for poll tax but pay nothing'(194). The collection of tax on the island was so unsuccessful that in 1914 the DC, Beech, asked for permission to post tax clerks at all the ferries leading to the mainland and refuse to allow passage on them to anyone without a tax receipt(195). The PC was unwilling to face the disruption and confrontation that such a drastic measure would entail, and told Beech that he thought it would be 'undesirable to make collections at the ferries under the present circumstances'(196). The collection of

191. EAS, (W), 4 Aug 1906.
192. Section VIII, 'Labour', Takaungu Sub-district AR, 1909, KNA DC MSA 1/1.
193. PC - Chief Sec., 6 Dec 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/12/71
194. PC - Chief Sec., 17 May 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/12/71.
195. DC Msa - PC, 17 Dec 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/12/71.
196. Hemsted, for PC -DC Msa, 24 Dec 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/12/71

poll tax on the island remained extremely patchy.

Discussion of the changing meaning and implications of the term 'Swahili' has generally failed to place the debate in this context, that of the labour and tax issues. Underlying the whole debate on the Swahili in the first decades of this century was this appreciation that becoming 'Swahili' gave Africans more options, and challenged the ability of the state to record and control the population. It posed another problem too. Africans in colonial Kenya were subject to different taxes and often different laws from those for other groups - Arabs, Indians and Europeans. Many members of Mombasa's Twelve Tribes claimed that they should be treated as 'non-natives', and given the same status as Arabs, as they too had come to claim Arabian origins(197). This would make them exempt from the Native Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance, and the Native Authority Ordinance, both measures intended to encourage the supply of labour. After the passing of the Natives Registration Ordinance in 1915, it also meant that when that ordinance came to be enforced, as it was from 1920, they would be exempt from the carrying of passes. The administration resolutely continued to define 'Swahili' as Africans, even passing an amendment to the 1910 Native Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance to clarify this(198).

This limitation of the legal freedoms that the status of Swahili offered was not, however, enough. Though the Swahili of Mombasa were legally subject to oppressive colonial legislation, desertion, tax evasion and irregular

197. Kindy, Life and Politics.., Chapter 4; Salim, Swahili-speaking Peoples.., Chap 5.
198. Sect 2, Ord No.15 of 1910, KNA AG/4/798

working continued to be rife in Mombasa(199).

Mijikenda and other Africans in Mombasa were not only beyond the easy reach of the state. They were also beyond the reach of their homestead heads who, faced with demands for taxes on behalf of these theoretical members of their homesteads, might redouble their efforts to acquire a share of their juniors' earnings.

The shift in obligations that participation in these networks entailed had a considerable effect on the attitude of homestead heads to these movements. Mijikenda homestead heads were deeply and consistently opposed to their female children going to Mombasa(200), unless it were in marriage to a town-dweller who had paid a bride-price(201). Otherwise, women who moved to town did so as an act of rebellion, for it meant that their homestead head either lost their potential bride price, or if they were already married, faced demands from the abandoned husband for the return of the bride price. Most moved to the protection of a man, and often these men, or a friend of theirs, had some relationship to their husband or father, as trading partner or host in Mombasa(202). But reclaiming compensation from such men was difficult, since they were not subject to the operations of 'native' courts, nor were Mijikenda marriages recognised in the magistrate's court(203). The male patron of the woman

199. See for example p.3, 'Report on Native Affairs in Mombasa', 1930, KNA DC MSA 3/3.
200. (iv) 'Social condition of the people', in Malindi District AR, 1919-20, KNA PC Coast 1/1/412; also ADC Kilifi - SCC, 7 August 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/3/130; also Int 43a.
201. Int 54a.
202. See the case of Sudi bin Ali, EAS (W), 21 July 1911.
203. Crown Counsel - SCC, 4 Sept 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/1/130.

might convert her to Islam, and conceal her from her husband or father;

> If you look for her, you'll get tired, she's being hidden, oh, perhaps she's in that house, watching you, and you're wandering about, looking for her... She's already had her clothes changed, she's wearing that buibui [Muslim women's covering], the black thing, right to her feet...She could come right up to you, you wouldn't know her, she's already lost, that's it(204)

Their Muslim patrons claimed a bride price for the women in at least some of these matches(205). Sometimes it was they who provided the housing in these relationships, renting a room from someone else and sharing it with a succession of sub-tenants who were also their lovers(206). In a phrase illustrative of the changing meaning of the term, these were called 'Swahili marriages'(207), the woman also being called mke wa kinyumbani, or 'wife in the house'(208). These women were Swahili, in that they lived in the town and their obligations and claims were on other townspeople, not on the rural networks of kin from which they had fled, and Europeans at the time were quick to identify as 'Swahili' any women whose lives they saw as immoral(209). The movement of women to the town, to change their identity and live as Muslims, was and remains a source of intense annoyance to Mijikenda men of all ages, though also a source of considerable physical comfort and

204. Int 46a, p.5.
205. See the murder of Stephen Madema, EAS, (D), 15 March 1912.
206. Int 44a.
207. Int 24a.
208. Int 44a.
209. 'Population', Mombasa District AR, 1905-06, Draft, 8 May 1906, in KNA PC Coast 1/1/113.

convenience for them in Mombasa. For some, the ambiguity of this position is shielded by claiming that such women belonged to another Mijikenda group - Digo women in particular being thus accused(210).

The attitude of homestead heads to the movement of young men to the town were rather more complex. Amongst officials, it was widely felt in this period that the decline in the authority of Mijikenda elders was another factor limiting the supply of labour. Officials felt that elders wanted their young men to go out to work, or could at least be made to want this, but their lack of authority was such that this did not happen(211). There is a problem here with the definition of 'elders'. In a situation in which the age-grade initiations on which their power was claimed to have rested had not taken place for some time, the category of elder had become a blurred one, particularly with the introduction of government-appointed headmen, and later chiefs(212). The status of elder was claimed and contested by numbers of older men(213), and to discuss the power of elders is to talk of two different if related tensions - the power of homestead heads over their own juniors and the power of some homestead heads over others. In granting to favoured elders the backing of the state, the administration had added an intra-generational tension between homesteads to the inter-generational conflict within homesteads. Not all homestead heads were elders but almost all elders were homestead heads.

A number of measures were tried in an attempt to bolster

210. Int 34a.
211. Rabai Sub-district AR, 1911-12, KNA PC Coast 1/1/185; also ADC Kakoneni to PC, 5 Feb 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/56.
212. ADC Rabai - PC, 28 July 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/11/144.
213. ADC Rabai - PC, 27 Jan 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/10/54.

the power of elders and enlist this power in support of the state: elders were gazetted, and in Rabai these 'official' elders were given a monopoly of palm wine sales(214). Their courts were incorporated into the system of justice, and their judgement given new weight by the approval and if necessary the physical support of the state. The 1912 Native Authority Ordinance gave them the power to demand labour from men, and to fine those who refused. Headmen were fired for not cooperating in labour recruiting(215). But labour recruitment remained difficult, even during the First World War, when massive forcible recruiting for the Carrier Corps under the Native Followers Recruitment Ordinance gave headmen considerably increased legal powers of coercion(216). Despite government support, headmen commanded little respect and no popularity(217). Other homestead heads were unwilling to allow their juniors to be sent out to work on contracts in order to help these 'elders' keep their jobs, and had other reasons for disliking attempts to make their juniors work.

To an extent, this was because they needed their labour within the local trading economy. In Rabai, the young men of the homestead tapped the trees of the homestead head, and transported the tembo for sale(218), an activity which continued despite the monopoly licence granted to elders(219), and which allowed a considerable

214. ibid.
225. Traill, ADC Kilifi, Handing-Over Report, 12 Nov 1915, KNA PC Coast 1/1/196
216. Hemsted, APC - PC, 18 July 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/3/114; also G Hodges, The Carrier Corps: military labour in the East African campaign, 1914-18, London/New York 1986, p.93.
217. Int 64a; also Rabai Safari Diary, 12 Jan 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/1/182.
218. ADC Rabai - Ag PC, 16 Oct 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/12/47.
219. Int 43a.

specialisation by the Rabai in the palm wine trade, and a consequent neglect of grain agriculture(220). Young male children (and many of the migrants to Mombasa were young, no older than ten or eleven) were needed as goatherds and bird scarers to guard the crops(221), though this demand diminished as maize displaced millet. Males were also the porters, even the trading representatives, of their elders, in trading between Mijikenda groups and to Mombasa(222). Even so, the burden of regular labour in the domestic economy was borne by women, not young men(223).

It was not the temporary loss of the labour of the young men that homestead heads objected to, although even in agriculture it was required seasonally, to break and plant ground for the start of the rains. It was rather that in seeking out the non-contract employment which they preferred, young men acquired debts and obligations to others, and moreover found that in town they could find a patron to find a wife for them(224), or could buy sex and a wife for themselves(225), without relying on the homestead head to convert their earnings into a bride for them. Involvement in the casual and informal sectors of the town virtually demanded that a Mijikenda migrant become 'lost', and homestead heads were not generally enthusiastic about it.

Young men, in turn, were not anxious to go to the plantations or sign on a government contract. Such labour did not of itself place them in any new networks, and elders might be expected to have approved of it,

220. 'District Economics', Political record Book, Vol II, pp.97-98, KNA DC KFI 3/2
221. Int 17b
222. Int 21b, 66a, 34a.
223. Int 40a.
224. Int 39a, 50a.
225. Int 44a.

offering as it did a discipline very much aimed at preventing their juniors becoming 'lost'. Yet it was mostly unpleasant work, and homestead heads knew this and had no desire to force their juniors into it. Work, particularly for those involved in the actual cutting of sisal, was hard, and the contract was on a 'ticket' - workers were not contracted for a number of months but for a number of tickets, each of thirty working days. The worker was set a task each day, and if they completed it a day's work was marked on their card.

> If you finish it, you get a day. If you don't manage it, you don't get a day, you just get your rations, just rations, you've lost your day, you just get flour for that day when the work has been too much for you. The next day, you finish that day. You're given that day. You've done two days of work to get one day, that was work on the sisal(226)

Moreover, there was much desertion from contracts, particularly on the plantations. Mijikenda deserters would be unlikely to flee back to their homestead, where they were identifiable, but far more likely to seek the shelter of the town. Most of all, the pressure from the headmen, attempting to obtain labour for portering, and road-building under the Native Authority Ordinance, did not have the intended effect of forcing some into contract work to avoid these imposts. Instead, young men moved to the town or to coastal land as squatters and casual labourers(227). This was a process that intensified during the First World War, in the face of conscription(228).

226. Int 44a, p.5
227. Int 40a; also Ag DC Kilifi - Ag PC, 7 Feb 1920, KNA PC Coast 1/9/52.
228. Hodges, The Carrier Corps.., p.102

Becoming 'lost' was a way of seeking refuge from these demands. In an attempt to reduce the motivation for flight, homestead heads later began to send women out to perform road work, rather then their young men, an expedient strongly discouraged by the administration after mission pressure(229), and one which not unnaturally encouraged women to seek a better life elsewhere.

Around Kilifi, two plantations did succeed during the First World War in obtaining numbers of Mijikenda workers through arrangements with elders made with the 'assistance' of the DC(230). This was at a time when headmen were being used to draft Mijikenda into the Carrier Corps in large numbers, and to force them into war-time contract labour for the Public Works Department(231). This proved so unpopular that 125 of 261 Giriama sent to the PWD deserted in less than a month(232). The cooperation of Mijikenda homestead heads in plantation recruitment arrangements was evidently obtained under threat of recruitment for the Carrier Corps(233).

According to this arrangement, workers on these plantations worked in strict rotation, on monthly contracts. There is no record of how workers were paid, but later, south of Mombasa, the cooperation of homestead heads in a system of effectively forced labour was obtained by paying wages directly to them, rather than to

229. TR Cashmore, Kaloleni Diary, 8 Sept 1921, KNA MSS 225/2.
230. 'Inspection of the labour camps of Sekoke Estate', 20 March 1915, and 'Inspection of the labour camps of Powysland Estates', 19 March 1915, KNA PC Coast 1/9/35.
231. DC Rabai - PC, 4 May 1916, and Exec Engineer, PWD - PC 26 July 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/51.
232. Exec Eng, PWD - PC, 20 and 25 Sept 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/51.
233. Minutes of Baraza, 21 Dec 1916, KNA PC Coast 1/12/282

their juniors who earned the wages(234). Yet the levels of coercion needed for this system were not sustainable, and by 1919 one of these plantations was again without Mijikenda labour. At the other, an enterprising European planter created networks of dependence through the homestead economy, as many Muslim traders had done. He obtained labour by advancing money for the purchase of a wife, the worker paying off the debt with his labour(235).

Homestead heads, then, faced a dilemma in this period. Taxes and the inflating costs of bridewealth gave them an increased need for money, and encouraged them to send young men out to work, an encouragement to which was added constant administrative pressure to the same end. Yet the same problems, of tax and brideweath, made them fear even more that their male offspring would become 'lost' by going to Mombasa, for then they would lose the earning power of these children. The homestead heads' lack of money, and consequent inability to provide goods or bridewealth, inclined young men to go to Mombasa, an inclination strengthened by their safety there from the demands for portering, road-building and other labour made by headmen on behalf of the government. Once there, they were disinclined to invest their earnings in the homestead economy; both because the returns from this were severely restricted by indebtedness and because they had little control of how the homestead head used any money they remitted, particularly since redistributive demands were strong.

Able to rely on relatives and friends within the town for help, they could make there a life with less controls,

234. Int 64a.
235. DC Malindi - PC, 18 July 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/9/52.

more freedom, than that of the homestead, though they were reliant on the goodwill of serangs and landlords, and had to work for this. Some informants give the need for bridewealth as the reason for their move to the town(236), others talk of clothes or say simply that there was more, and better, food(237), but a need for an income which they controlled is the common theme. Where they could, homestead heads tried to cope with the demands upon them, for food and bridewealth, by borrowing from traders. The indebtedness thus created could further restrict their ability to provide for all their dependants, and the introductions which it provided to town networks for their juniors allowed some of them to move to the town, becoming 'lost' to the homestead.

In these circumstances, homestead heads struggled to control their juniors, to stop them becoming lost. Fining and demanding bridewealth from men who ran off with their daughters proved ineffective in itself, for these men were beyond the power of elders and their courts. Elders turned to the administration for help in tracking down runaway women in the town, but even when they were found, living with a man, the fines imposed by a tribal court were not binding on an Arab or Swahili of Mombasa, and it was not a crime to live in Mombasa(238). The administration could do, and did, little to help(239). In one case, a woman was persuaded to return by the relative who had introduced her to a Mombasan patron, the relative having been threatened with the murder of his wife if he did not do this(240). Usually, though, 'lost' women were lost permanently.

236. Int 25a.
237. Int 26a.
238. ADC Msa - Resident Magistrate, 31 May 1922, KNA AG/4/2789.
239. Resident Magistrate, Note, n.d., KNA AG/4/2789.
240. EAS, (W), 29 July 1911.

Ensuring that young men brought both themselves and their wages back from a spell of employment was equally difficult. The stories of the perils of Mombasa(241) and the alleged cruelties of the slave-trading Arabs, some of them which possibly came to be embellished with details drawn from mission literature such as Mbotela's Uhuru wa Watumwa(242), may have been intended to dissuade potential migrants,

> ..the chain was put in here [heel]. So, you sit on the logs. So the Arabs come with their litle brats, well, your heels been pierced, so there's a sore there, isn't there? So this child cries, 'I want to hit it!' And his father gives him a cane and he hits. And there's this sore, and it's bleeding..and when he hits, the child is laughing(243)

The actual closeness of relationships between the people of Mombasa and the Mijikenda undermined the impact of such tales. Homestead heads could fall back on the sort of arrangements that existed in the Kilifi plantations to secure their juniors' wages, but such devices rather encouraged their juniors to flee. While wages were high and living relatively easy in Mombasa, there was little the headmen or other homestead heads could do. Anxious to limit the growth of the 'Swahili' population, the administration encouraged the homestead heads to retain control of migrants, but while the 'elders agreed to go to Malindi and Mombasa to look for their young men'(244), this seems to have had little effect.

241. Int 47a, 62a, 21b
242. J Mbotela, Uhuru wa Watumwa, London/Nairobi, 1934.
243. Int 46a, p.6
244. Safari Diary, Ag DC Giriama, 20 June 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/12/264.

So Mijikenda homestead heads were, in their own way, as dissatisfied with the operation of the networks that allowed Mijikenda to avoid contract labour as were European officials. The cause of their dissatisfaction was different, however. They themselves were sometimes deeply involved in networks of trade founded on the greater access to credit that Mombasans had. Moreover, homestead heads themselves could use these networks in migrating to the coast, or to Mombasa itself, as a temporary response to famine, and their juniors might participate in such temporary migrations while still remaining in the homestead economy. It was the movement to Mombasa and to the nearby coast of individual young men and women, and their loss to the homestead, to which homestead heads objected.

Officials, by contrast, were concerned about the coastal labour supply as a whole. In 1919, some persisted in seeing the problem as one of the Mijikenda not working. 'The Wanyika cling obstinately to idleness. The Kenya Mining Syndicate which is prospecting at Vitengeni has had to import all its labourers from Kavirondo'(245). But others had realised much earlier that the Mijikenda were only avoiding some kinds of labour.

> There were large numbers of natives living in Mombasa who would materially assist in augmenting the labour supply if they could be made to work, but they earned sufficient in one week to keep them for two months(246)

245. p.3, Nyika Reserve Annual Native Report, 1919-20, KNA PC Coast 1/12/279.
246. p. 91, Mr Waller, Director of Govt Transport, Evidence to the Native Labour Commission of 1912.

Unable for a number of reasons to directly discipline Mombasa's work force, and make it regular, officials began from 1912 to institute measures designed to restrict the alternatives of African workers in and around Mombasa, to break down the networks which allowed them these alternatives. From asking why the Mijikenda would not work, they had moved on to asking why the Mijikenda would not work <u>for them</u>.

3. 'Close contact with the coast residents is most prejudicial'

Government intervention and changing networks, 1908-26

Faced by severe labour problems on the coast, the administration introduced a number of measures intended to improve the supply of labour and the regularity with which it worked. Some of these measures were related directly and explicitly at the mobilisation and control of labour, and at restricting access to casual labour. Aside from these measures, most of which proved ineffective and were ignored by workers and administrators alike, there was another discernible strand of administrative policy on the coast which was at times closely interwoven with the perceived problems of labour shortage. This was the removal of Mijikenda from the influence of Arabs and Swahili, a policy phrased in terms of the need to prevent coastal Muslims from defrauding and corrupting hinterland Africans. Seen in other terms, it was a determined effort to diminish the options open to Mijikenda, and so to force them into a reliance on contract labour. It was a policy pursued with some determination up to 1920, yet this (like the impact of tax and other measures designed to increase the flow of labour) did not force the Mijikenda to accept the demands of the state. Rather, it encouraged the development of new techniques to avoid these demands.

* * *

By 1908, there existed in British East Africa a considerable amount of legislation intended to force Africans to work, and to prevent absenteeism and desertion.

These rules were in Mombasa supplemented by a special set of Township Rules which required the registration of all porters, messengers and

boat-men, all of whom were required to carry badges of identification and faced deregistration and banning for any misconduct(1). To these laws was added in 1910 a new Masters and Servants Ordinance which outlawed the activities of the labour agents whom many coast planters accused of stealing their labour(2). In 1915, it was made clear by amending legislation that this ordinance was intended to outlaw only those agents who did not work under European control. As the Attorney-General explained,

> It has long been a recognised practice for an employer to send a native back to his village in order that he may induce others to enter the employment of his master. The practice is generally free from objection(3).

Yet none of these rules were enforced in Mombasa, a town full of tax evaders and deserters(4), where casual and informal labour defied regulation. Apparently aware of the impossibility of identifying and apprehending offenders, officials and particularly the police seem to have abandoned all attempts to enforce these laws, despite the complaints of irate planters, who found that police were reluctant to trace and arrest deserters in Mombasa(5). In 1912, one planter had to catch and prosecute for himself a 'Swahili' labour tout who had encouraged his workers to desert(6).

1. See 'Township Rules' and 'Registration of boats', attached to Despatch 624, 28 Nov 1906, PRO CO 533 18
2. See EAS, (W), 27 Oct 1906; and file KNA AG/4/1612.
3. Memo, Barth, Attorney-General, 4 Feb 1915, KNA AG/4/1614.
4. See PC - Chief Sec, 6 Dec 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/12/71; also Chapter 2, above.
5. Brand - Collector, Msa, 24 Feb 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/12/41
6. EAS, (D), 20 April 1912.

The difficulties which the administration faced in directly controlling the labour force were clearly shown in events at Kilindini harbour. In 1912 complaints appeared in the East African Standard to the effect that Europeans arriving at the port were being overcharged and manhandled by the boat-men, the crews of the boats that took passengers to and from steamers moored off-shore(7). These were casual workers, the junior relatives, friends or clients of the boat-owners, and though they were supposed to be registered, to carry badges, to charge fixed prices and not to compete for business(8), all of these regulations had been flouted.

Prodded into action by the the newspaper campaign, the administration announced in May 1912 a set of 'new' regulations, essentially the same as the old ones. When they sent in the water-police to arrest a number of boat-men for breaking the rules, a near-riot resulted. Due to the intervention of an extremely hostile crowd, the police were unable to identify or apprehend the law-breakers(9). A subsequent attempt to subdue the boat-men by banning them completely failed, though the government used its own boats to carry passengers(10). The boat-men could hardly be starved into submission in a town where there was always casual work, and there was no way of preventing them getting such work. Officials discovered with some alarm that the government boat-men were also unregistered and that attempts to discipline them with the threat of dismissal were to no avail - for these men too were unregistered and unidentifiable, and if fired one

7. EAS (W), 24 Feb 1912.
8. 'Registration of boats', attached to Despatch 624, 28 Nov 1906, PRO CO 533 18.
9. EAS (D), 21 May 1912, and EAS (W), 18 May 1912.
10. EAS (D) 29 May 1912.

day could get work again the next(11). Within a month the Kilindini boat-men were back at work: their unruliness was contained, but registration was unenforced(12). Direct attempts to break down the networks of labour within the town were clearly unlikely to meet with success. Direct attempts to make Mijikenda outside the towns work for Europeans by taxing them were frustrated because the networks of coastal society offered the Mijikenda alternatives, and attempts to control the time of workers within the town were similarly frustrated by the active resistance of the workers involved and the impossibility of identifying them.

Unsuccessful in direct attempts to make Africans work with the regularity, and in the occupations, required by the colonial economy, officials turned after 1908 to the use of other legislation. Such legislation was not directly associated with labour, but was clearly intended to limit the alternatives which enabled Africans on the coast to avoid regular wage labour. Initially, the legislation involved was that concerning palm-wine and the ownership of land, both of which issues came to have considerable relevance to the labour question. This began in a rather haphazard way, but after the 1912 Labour Commission had reported, and had identified the Mijikenda as an untapped source of labour, a more concerted policy was to emerge.

The Palm Wine Regulations of 1900 were originally intended as a revenue-raising measure on the coast. They required anyone selling palm wine to obtain a licence, initially at a cost of Rs 15(13). First applied in the

11. Memo of minutes of Township Cttee, 19 Sept 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/11/377.
12. EAS (D), 21 June 1912.
13. Palm Wine Regulations, 24 Nov 1900, KNA AG/4/1579.

major towns, they were quickly extended so that by 1903 it was an offence to sell palm wine without a licence anywhere on the coast. The regulations were at this stage still not associated with labour, and the extension of the area of their operation was made on the grounds that 'this... would be both remunerative as regards revenue and beneficial in preventing drunkenness'(14). Enforcement was somewhat patchy, but the trade was clearly profitable, for hundreds of such licences were taken out, and even the raising of the fee to Rs 25 a year (nearly three months wages at the prevailing rates) did not dissuade sellers(15). At this stage there was no attempt to control the number of licences issued. By 1907, however, the possibilities of limiting the number of palm-wine vendors as an instrument of labour policy were being mooted.

This idea grew out of two separate concerns. The first, expressed most directly in the East African Standard, was that potential labourers, particularly in Mombasa, had such easy access to alcohol that they whiled away their time in pleasant drinking rather than seeking work:

> The drink curse has the lower class of the native in the Mombasa district in its grip...The habit is most rife among the mainland natives who come over here to labour, probably with the intention of earning their hut tax and then returning to their shambas. They are however drawn towards the wine market..(16)

While the newspaper focussed on this problem, DCs in

14. Sub-Cmmr, Coast - Commissioner, 22 July 1903, KNA PC Coast 1/1/93.
15. EAS (W), 24 Feb 1906.
16. EAS(W), 24 Feb 1906.

Mombasa and in the rural areas were more concerned with the realisation that the palm-wine economy was enormous and lucrative. Heads of homesteads in palm-wine areas lived off the income from their trees, and employed their juniors to tap and sell wine from their trees(17). Those Mijikenda without coconut palms devoted their efforts to trading livestock and grain for palm-wine, rather than seeking work for planters(18). Mijikenda, Swahili and Arab planters with little capital could compete successfully with Europeans for labour not only because they offered less rigorous conditions, but because they paid partly in palm-wine(19). The regulations of 1900 theoretically outlawed this arrangement, as tree-owners were legally permitted to supply palm-wine only to licence-holders(20), but the frequent breaches of this law were apparently ignored. Palm-wine was an important part, in a sense the motor, of some of the rural and urban alternatives which kept the Mijikenda out of certain types of work. To make the Mijikenda work in the ways the colonial economy required, this palm-wine economy had to be reduced.

Yet, while attempts to enforce the palm-wine regulations as they stood came to be seen as labour measures, the suggestion that limits be set on the numbers of licences issued was not initially followed up(21) - perhaps because the income from licences was too important to lose. Limits on the number of sellers did not come until the debate provoked by the 1912 Labour Commission made it clear that taxing the trade through licensing was not enough to reduce it, for the trade was lucrative enough to bear such

17. ADC Rabai - Ag PC, 16 Oct 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/1/130.
18. ibid.
19. SNA - Sec. of Admin, 28 Sept 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/1/130.
20. ADC Msa - DC Msa, 14 Dec 1908, KNA PC Coast 1/1/138
21. ADSP Mombasa - IGP, 2 April 1908, KNA PC Coast 1/1/138.

taxation without forcing the sellers out of business.

From 1912, a new approach was tried in Mombasa and in Rabai, where the bulk of the Mijikenda palm-wine trade took place. The regulations ceased to be used as a tax, and came to be used to limit the numbers of sellers. The number of licences issued fell dramatically: in 1912, 198 Rabai held licences, but in 1913 only thirty-nine did(22). On Mombasa island, seventy-four licences were issued in 1912, and ten in 1914(23) . There was also a change in the type of people to whom licences were given. In Rabai, Deacon, the ADC, sought to bolster the power of the headmen whom he had designated, one for each clan, by issuing licences only to them(24). In Mombasa, the DC sought to fix and limit the trade by giving licences only to those who had permanent premises from which to sell their palm-wine(25). Hobley, the PC, encouraged both of these ideas(26), and indeed seems to have persuaded Deacon out of his initial belief that palm-wine legislation could not be used to increase the labour supply(27).

Much of the trade had previously been in the hands of hawkers. Apparently for purposes of control, they had been limited to Kilindini bazaar and to the the market on Salim Road, which lay roughly between the stone town, the old town and the new quarters(28). Limiting a smaller number of traders to fixed addresses allowed control but

22. ADC Rabai - PC, 27 Jan 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/10/54.
23. DC Msa - PC, 20 Nov 1912; and DC Msa - PC, 4 Jan 1915, KNA PC Coast 1/10/54.
24. ADC Rabai - PC, 27 Jan 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/10/54.
25. PC - DC Msa, 18 Dec 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/10/54.
26. PC - ADC Rabai, 20 Feb 1913; and PC - DC Msa, 18 Dec 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/10/54
27. ADC Rabai - PC, 24 Dec 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/10/54.
28. Collector - HM Sub-Commr, 4 Jan 1906, KNA PC Coast 1/1/113

dispersed the threatening concentration of drinkers, and more importantly it pushed up the capital required of those involved. Selling palm wine could no longer be an alternative casual occupation: a trend began towards the establishment of 'clubs', run by full-time wine sellers, which were in themselves to occasion considerable concern as centres of immorality in the 1920s(29).

Hobley was also strongly opposed to women being allowed to sell palm-wine, and instructed that licences should not be sold to them(30). Palm-wine helped support numbers of women, Mijikenda and others, who had come to the town as runaways and lived as temporary wives, cooks and wine-sellers, and who provided an introduction to the town for other relatives. For officials, their role in these networks was expressed in terms of their being a part of the growing, indolent and immoral 'Swahili' population of the town. This discourse, in which Islamic coastal culture was seen as corrupting and indolent, came to lie at the centre of government policy after 1912.

The attempt to make the palm-wine trade a full-time job for a small number of men was not entirely successful. Women applied for licences in the names of their husbands(31), and a thriving illicit trade continued in the town, but was forced out of the markets and into the palm plantations which still covered parts of the island and the mainland at Kisauni and Changamwe. Here, Mijikenda squatters who worked as tappers for the landowners augmented their own income by selling palm-wine to those

29. Ag SCC - all DCs, 16 Oct 1923 KNA PC Coast 1/12/218.
30. Morrison (a Mombasa solicitor) - PC, 17 Dec 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/10/54.
31. ibid.

who came looking for it, and augmented the income of inquisitive policemen to avoid prosecution;

> They banned it, but we didn't obey, we just carried on. If we obeyed, and did not sell, what would we eat? If a policeman saw, he'd give you trouble, but if you give him two shillings, he'd go and drink tea(32)

New legislation introduced on the subject in 1915 was never enforced, and was in 1921 replaced by another Ordinance. The 1900 Regulations had failed to control the trade effectively, especially outside the town, partly because anyone was allowed to produce palm-wine - it was only sale that was restricted. The production of palm-wine is a fairly lengthy process, in which containers are attached to the trees for long periods, and offered more possibilities for control. The 1921 Ordinance therefore introduced a system of licences for tapping, as well as licences for selling: a tree owner who wished to tap had to take out a licence to do so, and a tapper had to possess a licence to work for a producer(33). Within towns, the new ordinance also allowed for the establishment of a municipal monopoly on alcohol sales to Africans, though this option was not immediately taken up in Mombasa(34). Evasion of the licensing restrictions of the Ordinance continued to be widespread, but the opportunities for casual earning which the palm-wine trade offered were dramatically reduced between 1912 and 1922.

Land legislation on the coast has a more complex genesis. The legal aspects of land ownership were, inevitably,

32. Int 43b, p.3
33. Ag Governor - SoS, 22 July 1921, KNA AG/4/1523
34. Natives Liquor Ordinance, 1921, KNA AG/4/1523.

confused by the ambiguous status of the coast. Unlike the rest of Kenya, the coast continued to be a protectorate throughout the colonial period: theoretically, it was the domain of the Sultan of Zanzibar. Muslim inhabitants of the area were governed by Muslim law, and in theory Muslim Africans had rights to private ownership of land which were denied to Africans elsewhere. Elsewhere in the country, at the start of British rule, the administration held that land belonged to no individual, but either to certain groups as a communal possession or to nobody at all. In either case, it was at the disposal of the British Crown. This was the legal basis for the large grants of land which the administration made to settlers. On the coast, officials faced the unsettling and inconvenient problem that people could own land, that everything did not actually belong to the Crown. The confusion was worsened by the inexactitude of the boundaries involved. The Sultan's dominions had been set at a strip ten miles wide, but the meaning of this was obscure. If taken as meaning ten miles from the high tide mark, the numerous creeks of the coast would push the boundaries of the Sultan's domain into the nyika bushland. The complexities of this issue were never resolved: the 'ten-mile strip' was never mapped.

The vast scale of the problem dawned on the administration only slowly. There was for several years no system of land registration or survey. This absence of registration coincided with a considerable speculative boom, and the buying up of considerable areas of land by European, Indian, Arab and Swahili speculators. Initially this speculation concentrated on the line-of-rail up through Mazera's and Mariakani, where land was bought not only because it would be on a transport route, but more simply because the Uganda Railway would quite likely have

to buy it off the purchaser for their own use(35). Speculation thereafter concentrated on potential plantation land, at Changamwe, Miritini, Maunguja, and Nguuni - areas close either to creeks or to the rail line. Some of these buyers were speculators, others were themselves planters(36). All these sales were recorded in the transactions register in Mombasa, without survey and without evidence of ownership being offered or requested. The possibilities for fraud were clearly tremendous. Examples occurred of the same piece of land being sold to several different purchasers by several different vendors(37), some of whom had distinctly insubstantial claims. Some vendors were clearly aware that the land which they were purporting to sell had already been sold by someone else(38). A few had themselves already sold the same land to someone else(39).

These frauds were often represented as the work of unscrupulous Arabs and Swahilis, at the expense of Africans:

> In ways that are crooked and things that are dark, the simple Swahili is a specialist and his talents are most prodigious when he wants to sell a shamba to which he has no title(40)

Land frauds were becoming another useful slur with which to sully the reputation of the unfortunate Swahili. It is

35. Collector, Msa - Sub-Commr,30 Aug 1906,KNA PC Coast 1/1/113 36. ADC Shimoni - PC, 8 Oct 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/11/146; also Registrar of Documents - PC, 14 April 1913, KNA AG/4/2162.
37. ADC Rabai - Land Officer, 25 March 1914, KNA AG/4/2162.
38. eg Application Cause 83 of 1920, KNA AG/4/1889.
39. Land Officer - AG, 9 May 1916, KNA AG/4/1929.
40. EAS (W), 3 Aug 1912.

evident that some of the planters and traders who had established themselves around the creeks attempted to cash in their interests, presenting their right to use land as a right of alienation and selling off areas to which Mijikenda had some communal claim(41). Officials presented the process as a clash between Mijikenda pagans, with no idea of individual land tenure and avaricious coastal Muslims(42), anxious to sell land, a view which they supported by quoting Krapf's comments on Muslim 'encroachment'(43).

The movement of population, and the close family ties between Mijikenda, Swahili and Arab have already been noted. In a situation of such shifting boundaries, it is almost certainly wrong to assume that any individual accepted the immutability of any land law: law, like ethnicity, was subject to negotiation. In the areas which became disputed, land ownership had never been an issue before - for Muslims and non-Muslims, trees were owned, but other crops were grown by shifting cultivation. The difference between Muslim and non-Muslim systems of land tenure has been overplayed, for ownership of land was not initially relevant - land was plentiful. What was relevant was that through trade, indebtedness, and claims to elderhood, a number of people, usually elder men, could claim interest in the same piece of land, land which none of them personally ever had cultivated or intended to cultivate. Rather they claimed an interest in the use of such land. The permission of the elders and sometimes a payment to them was

41. Civil Case No 60 of 1913, Msa High Court, KNA PC Coast 1/10/209.
42. See RW Hamilton 'Land tenure among the Bantu Wanyika of East Africa' JAS XX, 1921.
43. Hollis, Report No. 4 on Mile 7.2 - 9.5, 23 Dec 1906, KNA AG/4/2055.

demanded before cultivation of new land could begin(44). This, the fact that many of those selling land in the colonial period were not not in physical occupation of it does not necessarily mean that they were practising deliberate fraud, although some sellers clearly were intentionally cheating buyers. The rush to transform an interest in land into a right to sell it was sparked by the development of a market in land on the coast, and in this rush people from all religions and groups attempted to exploit the possibilities of this market by developing the concepts of land tenure.

It was not only Muslims who sold land in the hinterland of Mombasa: Mijikenda elders happily colluded with them(45), or themselves sold land(46), claiming that as the elders of their groups they had the right to sell lands occupied, or once occupied, by the group. For all concerned, such sales were in part a defensive measure(47); facing the possiblity of someone else selling these lands, or the government claiming them, they sought to turn their claim on these lands, or on those who actually did farm them, into cash. In 1908, for example, two Swahili of Jomvu sold land on the border of Miritini and Rabai, claiming that they 'receive rent from the Wanika on account of this land'(48). Presenting ties of debt or patronage in terms of rent and tenancy, that is the control of land rather than of people, allowed some wealthy men to claim a right to sell land which previously had no

44. Kayamba, 'Notes on the Wadigo', p.90; p.1, 'Native Laws and customs of the Takaungu Sub-district', 1898, KNA PC Coast 1/1/138.
45. W Bowen - PC, 3 July 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/11/89
46. Registrar of Slaves - Ag PC, 30 March 1910, KNA PC Coast 1/11/363; ADC Rabai - PC, 28 July 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/11/144; Sub-Commr, Msa, Memo 22 July 1904, KNA PC Coast 1/1/60.
47. ADC Shimoni - PC, 26 Sept 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/11/144.
48. Ag DC Msa - ADC Rabai, 13 Nov 1908, KNA PC Coast 1/11/9

innate value. When it was convenient, as with the purchase of land from Duruma elders for the railway, the government accepted the right of Mijikenda elders to sell(49). Officials contributed to the growing literature on Mijikenda 'traditions' by noting that the elders from whom they purchased land were the only ones entitled to sell it(50).

In this process of the claiming and sale of land, Arabs and Swahili had a clear advantage, since they had easier access to the registration of transactions, which was carried out in Mombasa by a Muslim scribe, and they had the further advantage that through their access to credit they had acquired more clients and debtors than had many Mijikenda elders. Yet to assume that the sale of the land on the coast was an injustice perpetrated by Muslims on pagan Mijikenda is wholly innaccurate, for influential men in both groups did their best to enrich themselves.

Shortly after the Duruma communal sale to the government, Muslim members of the Nine Tribes and the Three Tribes who claimed (somewhat tendentiously) the position of leaders of their groups asserted that the Swahili of Mombasa held land communally, and that the elders of the Tribes could sell it on behalf of the group(51). There had clearly been, among Arabs and Swahili as well as among Mijikenda, a practice whereby the dominant man of a clan or area granted rights to use land to others, often in return for a gift(52). This was not, perhaps, so much a question of

49. Doc 553A of 1908, 4 June 1908, in KNA PC Coast 1/1/341.
50. Compare above with p.122 of the Political Record Book, KNA DC MSA 8/2.
51. See eg Deed of 15 Aug 1913, in KNA PC Coast 1/11/197.
52. See eg Sperling, 'The growth of Islam..', Appendix V, part 2, 5, 6.

using the land itself as of acquiring the approval, and most of all the protection, of a powerful man in using it. The elders of the Nine Tribes claimed an interest beyond this, even describing a 'traditional' procedure for the division of the takings from a land sale among the elders - though they differed over the details of this tradition(53).

This claim to a right to sell communal land came at the end of a long struggle between the administration and various of these elders who had claimed as individuals the right to sell land in several different areas where the government disputed this right(54). Their claim in those cases had been based on the principle that anyone could start farming land in the communal area of their Tribe, and that once cultivated, the land was theirs and their descendants' to sell freehold, even if it was later left uncultivated and unoccupied by them - the argument being that the ancestors of the vendors had once occupied the land(55). Accepting these various presentations as essentially accurate, Salim has argued that Swahili land tenure was African in the way land was acquired, but Muslim in that it permitted alienation once land was acquired(56). It might be more appropriate to argue that the laws of land tenure were not fixed, that the ease with which the boundaries of ethnicity could be crossed, and the earlier abundance of land, had meant that no system had been required or practicable. As an elder of the Nine Tribes put it, in one of the rather contradictory submissions to a court in 1918, 'No transactions in land

53. Hamilton, Judgement, 23 December 1918, in KNA PC Coast 1/11/24.
54. Supplementary report by ADC Msa, 17 March 1908, KNA PC Coast
55. Hollis, Report No 4, Mile 7.2 - 9.5, 23 Dec 1906, KNA AG/4/2055.
56. Salim, Swahili-Speaking Peoples.., pp. 125-6.

took place before I was born. There were no purchasers then'(57). The attempts to renegotiate these laws, and to set precedents and claim rights, which resulted from the development of a market in land were brought to an end by legislation intended to fix laws and, most importantly, to establish clear boundaries. Given this, the formulation and even more so the functioning of the 1908 Land Titles Ordinance should not be seen only in the context of the confusion over land titles. In fixing boundaries, the rights and domains of different groups, the operations of the ordinance became intimately connected with problems of labour and ethnicity on the coast.

The government was watching with alarm the sale of large areas of the coast, particularly the coastal plain, in the first years of this century. In 1908 they sought to stem, and indeed to reverse, this process, with the Land Titles Ordinance. The ostensible aim of this Ordinance was to guarantee titles to land on the coast, for purchasers of land had frequently found that their title was contested by someone else to whom the same land had been sold by another vendor, and 'the insecurity of title to land at the coast does and will materially retard the economic development of the coast'(58). The new ordinance required that all land-owners should claim their land, have it properly surveyed and provide evidence of ownership; title, once purchased, would be secure. Section 17 of the new Ordinance, was, however, most significant. All land-owners in areas to which the Ordinance was applied were required to register their land, not only those who were selling, and under section 17 all land which was not claimed, or to which title was not proven,

57. Said bin Sheikh, quoted in Hamilton, Judgement, 23 Dec 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/11/24.
58. Memo, Crown Advocate, 1908, KNA AG/4/2143.

became the property of the Crown.

Such land was considered to be waste land, a term which, it must be said, confuses the issue. Shifting cultivation meant that there was indeed much unused land at any one time, but such land was not necessarily 'waste'. Moreover, waste land on the coast was actually often wholly or partly occupied - usually by Mijikenda or ex-slave cultivators(59). Since they did not claim title to the land, their presence on it did not discourage officials from declaring it to be waste. The government had, indeed, claimed possession of waste lands on the coast since the time of the Company - the Sultan's lease to the Company had given it the right to 'dispose of' such lands(60). In 1897, Her Majesty's Commissioner (the official in charge of British East Africa) had attempted to clarify this vague statement with the 'Waste Lands Regulations', claiming all waste lands as the property of the Crown(61). These were, however, ultra vires, as was another notice of 1907 to the same effect(62). Only with the 1908 Ordinance did the Crown secure a legal claim to the land of the coast.

It was this claim, to the land which no-one else claimed, which the government was relying on to encourage European plantations on the coast. The problem with privately-owned land was not just that title was insecure - it was, as the Sub-Commissioner remarked in 1906, expensive:

58. Memo, Crown Advocate, 1908, KNA AG/4/2143.
59. See eg DC Msa - Ag PC, 10 Sept 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/11/197; Hollis, Report no 4, 23 Dec 1906, KNA AG/4/2055; also SCC - Crown Counsel, 21 March 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/11/336.
60. Article 2 of IBEA Concession, 24 May 1887, KNA AG/4/2162.
61. Waste Lands Regulations, 31 Aug 1897, KNA AG/4/2162.
62. Notice, Hayes-Sadler, 18 May 1907, KNA AG/4/2162.

> At present all land within the 10 miles zone is more or less claimed by Arabs or Swahilis, many of whom own small plots for which they want exorbitant prices. It is therefore very difficult for intending settlers to acquire land in any quantity(63)

With the 1908 Ordinance the administration was to take this land from those who claimed it and dispense it as Crown Land to settlers. The need to do this became most pressing to the south of Mombasa, where the Ordinance was applied later than it was in the north(64). By 1910, the administration had agreed to grant 348,000 acres, or rather more than five hundred square miles, of land in the coast strip south of Mombasa to plantation companies. The bulk of this was to go to the East African Estates Limited(65). It was a colossal area, more or less the whole of the ten-mile strip between Mombasa and German East Africa, and the government did not own it.

Since the companies did not rush to take up their full allocations, no immediate crisis resulted, but at the end of 1913 Watkins, then ADC of Mombasa District, wrote a series of letters and reports urging the resolution of this problem by application of the Land Titles Ordinance to the land south of Mombasa, given 'the necessity of freeing acres for the fulfilment of government obligations'(66). He estimated that with the implementation of the Ordinance 'some 200,000 acres will be freed from native claims'(67). Under Watkins' scheme,

63. Quoted in EAS (W), 14 April 1906.
64. 'Report on lands south of Mombasa', ADC Mombasa, 2 Dec 1913, KNA AG/4/2160.
65. Memo, ADC Mombasa, 20 Dec 1913, KNA AG/4/2160.
66. p.2, 'Report on lands south of Mombasa', ADC Msa, KNA AG/4/2160.
67. Memo, ADC Msa, 20 Dec 1913, KNA AG/4/2160

the application of the Ordinance was accompanied by the declaration within the coastal zone of inalienable communal blocks for the Digo, who were to be effectively disallowed from claiming title under the Ordinance, and would otherwise become landless(68).

Thus, in giving ownership of much land to the Crown, the Ordinance had a further effect. It deprived numbers of Mijikenda and ex-slaves from securing the land which they had come to occupy, some of them as the dependants of traders and planters who themselves had no effective title to the land. The Ordinance effectively divided the population of the coast into the Twelve Tribes, Arabs and Indians, who could own and sell land; and the Mijikenda, who could not. This effect was intended when the Ordinance was first prepared, and Watkins' scheme south of Mombasa was merely an elaboration of this. As the Crown Advocate had explained in urging the passing of the Ordinance:

> Meanwhile, particularly in the neighbourhood of the larger towns, the number of squatters with the most shadowy claim of right, or with no claim of right at all, are extending and planting shambas to which, if the Government takes no steps, they will in course of time acquire a good holding title...It will shortly become impossible in many instances for the Government to affirm its right to its own property(69)

For the administration, lands cultivated by these small farmers - it is unclear whose squatters the Crown Advocate thought they were - were effectively waste lands, and therefore government land. As such, these farmers

68. ADC Msa - PC, 30 Dec 1913, KNA AG/4/2160
69. Memo, Crown Advocate, KNA AG/4/2143

threatened the Crown's claim to land but, equally importantly, they were the people whose failure to work (that is, whose avoidance of contract labour) was so irksome to officials. The Ordinance effectively operated to exclude these small farmers from ownership, even though it did not specifically bar them(70). Most of them had no idea that they were supposed to claim ownership, nor any idea of how to go about it(71). The existence and the functionings of the Ordinance were not explained to them. This was not the only obstacle they faced in claiming title.

Claims to ownership were generally 'proven' by amassing numbers of witnesses, usually ex-slaves and other dependants of the claimant, and decisions as to the veracity of the evidence were generally left to certain local officials, particularly a Baluchi called Abdul Wahid and to Ali bin Salim al-Busaidi, the Liwali of Mombasa(72). These men were themselves government servants and considerable land-owners, and under their guidance the Recorder of Titles tended to uphold the rights of the government and of large, established land-owners. The extent to which this power could be abused was suggested in 1910, when all but one of the Arab officials on the coast refused point-blank an order to supply a list of the property which they owned, the grounds of their refusal being that, as one put it, 'if I write a list I am afraid they might think that we have taken other people's land'(73). Claimants to land had to pay a fee, of 1% of the value of the land, and those whose claims were

70. Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters.., p. 196-200.
71. Int 5b, 54a.
72. See Collector's Intelligence Diary, 1 June 1906, KNA PC Coast 1/17/33;PC - Chief Sec, 28 May 1914,KNA PC Coast 1/11/315
73. Liwali of Mambrui - DC Malindi, 16 Dec 1909, KNA PC Coast 1/11/19.

disallowed were fined a further 2% of the value of the land, for making a 'trivial' claim(74). If the occupiers of land did not anyway expect sympathetic treatment, these charges were strong disincentives to making any claim at all.

There was, it seems, a constant passive resistance to the work of the Recorder of Titles, making clear the unpopularity of the process and the fear of many people that they would lose out to the government in the process. Claimants sought to delay the process by not turning up to show the boundaries of their plots(75), they refused to pay survey fees or cut boundary lines(76), and the concrete survey beacons were moved or broken as soon as they were put in(77).

For those Mijikenda who managed to claim title despite the obstructions put in their way, there could be one final and insuperable obstruction. Though this was not part of the Ordinance, the Recorder of Titles sometimes ruled that a 'Nyika' claimant, even a Muslim, was not legally capable of owning a freehold(78). In such cases, after going through the expense and difficulty of the claim, the claimant was simply granted a certificate of interest in the land - not ownership of it. The policy was not applied consistently, but no doubt it was enough to give even those Mijikenda who had heard of Land Titles the

74. 'Report of special committee on the Land Titles Ordinance', 6 March 1908, KNA AG/4/2143.
75. PC - Attorney-General, 14 July 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/11/104.
76. PC - Chief Sec, 4 Aug 1913, KNA AG/4/2162.
77. p.3, Memo on survey, Recorder of titles, 1914, KNA AG/4/2162
78. Sperling, 'The Growth of Islam..', p.132.

impression that land titles were not for the likes of them. Cooper has noted that the state in Kenya never assisted Arab, Swahili and Indian plantation owners to control their land and labour, as they did in Zanzibar(79). Yet these plantation owners were privileged in obtaining title to the land in the first place.

The working of the Land Titles Ordinance became involved in the creation of a boundary on the coast - a boundary that physically divided the coast into reserves and surveyed land, and legally divided its population into land-owners and non-land-owners, Mijikenda and others. Swahili and Arab Muslims could own land, but Mijikenda, though some of them might be converts to Islam, could not. Officials had earlier been told that claims to alienable freehold by 'natives' should not be accepted(80), and under the Ordinance the 'Reserves' were excluded from the jurisdiction of the Recorder of Titles. The Attorney-General several times repeated that the Nyika Reserves should be excluded from the Recorder's jurisdiction: the Mijikenda could not hold a title to land, even communally(81). South of Mombasa, in coastal land outside the Reserve, Digo who did make claims to land were persuaded to drop these claims, in accordance with Watkins' suggestions(82).

This distinction between land-owning and non-land-owning groups was enshrined in law by a special ordinance in 1910 which banned the sale of land by 'Wanyika': should any Mijikenda manage to claim land, they would be denied the

79. Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters.., Introduction
80. HM Commr - Collector, Msa, 24 Aug 1899, KNA PC Coast 1/12/98.
81. AG - PC, 4 June 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/11/150; AG - PC 16 June 1914, KNA AG/4/2162.
82. Sperling, 'The growth of Islam..', p. 134.

right to alienate it(83). The Swahili of Mombasa, by contrast, were denied the right of communal ownership, with or without the right to alienate. Elders claiming to represent the Three and the Nine Tribes had their claims to land turned down(84). The concern of the government in refusing these claims was not only the stated one, that given freehold the elders would simply have sold the land. Even the idea of an inalienable reserve for Swahili cultivators was rejected by the Governor after initial enthusiasm from de Lacey, the Assistant Recorder of Titles(85): the Attorney-General arguing that the Twelve Tribes were not really a tribal entity and were not 'bona fide agriculturalists'(86). The Recorder of Titles supported the Attorney-General's view, arguing that the Twelve Tribes belonged in the town:

> I think it will also be found that the majority of members are residents of Mombasa and do not depend for a livelihood on their shambas(87)

Having denied Mijikenda and ex-slaves ownership of land on the coastal strip, the government was not willing to let them secure access to communal land in the area by granting such land to the Twelve Tribes. The Twelve Tribes, they had realised, were a rather permeable institution.

Before 1895, the difference between Muslim and Mijikenda law on land tenure had been unimportant, since individuals

83. 'An ordinance to provide for the protection of the native land areas, Seyyidieh', 1910, in KNA AG/4/2160.
84. AG - Ross (a solicitor), 31 May 1915, KNA AG/4/2111
85. AG - Chief Sec, 8 May 1916, KNA AG/4/2111.
86. Monson, for Governor - Abdullah Rithiwani, 30 Dec 1915, KNA AG/4/2111.
87. Recorder of Titles - Chief Sec, 19 Nov 1915, KNA AG/4/2111

could and did reinterpret and adapt such laws. The fixing of these differences by colonial legislation meant that in the changing circumstances of the twentieth century the rights and opportunities of Mijikenda had become very different from those of Swahili and Arabs.

The effects of this separation are illustrated by the events surrounding the sale of a large area of land in the Nguuni area, near Mwakirunge, on the mainland north of Mombasa. In 1908 several Swahili sold land here to a Dr Bowen. The sale was promptly disputed by other Swahili 'elders', who reached an accommodation with the original vendors, doubled the price and shared the proceeds(88). Some Ribe elders protested that they had an interest in the land, which they said had merely been loaned to the grandfathers of some of the sellers to cultivate(89). It is not clear whether these were the same Ribe elders who the next year sold to Bowen an area of land at Junda, also near Mwakirunge(90). The DC of Mombasa eventually announced that the land at Nguuni was 'waste', though noting the presence of thirty-three Mijikenda farmers, some of them converts to Islam(91). As was not uncommon, the purchaser made no effort to occupy the land for several years. In 1913 a new document of sale was drawn up, on behalf of the elders of the Nine Tribes, who claimed that their ancestors had occupied the land and shared a new payment of Rs 640. Two of these sellers justified their right to sell by invoking the closeness of the Nine Tribes and the Ribe, calling themselves 'Wazee

88. DC Msa - ADC Rabai, 17 March 1908; ADC Rabai - Bowen, 17 March 1908; Bowen - ADC Rabai, 4 Aug 1908, KNA PC Coast 1/11/9
89. DC Rabai - Ag SNA, 30 June 1908, KNA PC Coast 1/11/9
90. ADC Rabai - DC Msa, 11 Oct 1909, KNA PC Coast 1/12/53
91. DC Msa - Ag PC, 10 Sept 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/11/197

[elders] of Wakilifi from the Nine Tribes, Wazee of Ribe in the town of Mombasa'(92).

Bowen celebrated this new document by trying to fence off the land. A number of Ribe elders, encouraged by the DC of Mombasa, pulled down the fence(93). Bowen issued a summons against them, and the Chief Secretary signalled the administration's determination to disprove Bowen's claim to the land, and hence the communal rights of the Swahili, by authorising government legal support for the Ribe in the case(94). Bowen's unpopularity with the administration was ensured by the fact that he was both American and black(95). When the case came to court, however, the Ribe elders were found guilty of mischief. Instructed by the government to say that the land belonged to the Crown, they instead insisted that it belonged to the Ribe. This being legally impossible, and the administration being deprived of the argument that the land belonged to the Crown and not to Bowen, the elders were fined. As the Crown legal adviser put it, 'If it is tribal land the accused undoubtedly committed the Offence they were charged with'(96). Bowen kept the land, and the occupants were cleared from those parts of the land which Bowen planted with trees(97).

This sale was a part of the destruction of the ties of patronage through land use built up in this area. The expression of this closeness, through claims of alliance and kin, lost its value as vendors adduced these claims as

92. Document, dated 15 Aug 1913, in KNA PC Coast 1/11/197
93. DC - Ag PC, 10 Sept 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/11/197
94. Chief Sec - Ag PC, 19 Sept 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/11/197
95. Ag PC - Chief Sec, 14 Sept 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/11/197
96. Atkinson - DC, 7 Nov 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/11/197
97. Int 20a

proof of their right to sell(98). Among the Ribe today, the allegedly deceitful character of the Arabs and Swahili is still illustrated by reference to these events(99).

The land legislation was, in implementation and to an extent in conception, the beginning of a new policy toward the Mijikenda, a policy of which the creation of such distinctions was to be a central feature. A number of other measures affecting the residence and status of the coast population were involved.

British rule on the coast initially relied heavily on Arab officials. The Company, short of money and therefore of European personnel, had begun the employment of local 'aristocrats' to supplement its European staff(100). The favourable attitude of the Company towards Muslim officials was continued in the first years of the Protectorate. Hardinge, the first Commissioner, was of the opinion that Arabs and Swahili could be used as allies in the administration of Africans(101). Like the Company, the Protectorate was at first very short of administrative manpower and had little choice but to rely on locally-recruited allies. This, and the legal status of the coast as part of the Sultan of Zanzibar's domain, produced a curious parallel administration in and around the major towns: not simply a system of indirect rule, but a Muslim administration with considerable powers in its own right. There were liwalis, or governors, for Mombasa, Malindi, Lamu and other towns, and mudirs, with fewer powers, at smaller settlements such as Mtwapa. Like the DCs, liwalis had powers as second-class magistrates, as

98. SNA - PC, 24 Dec 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/11/9
99. Int 20a
100. Mackinnon - Mackenzie, 26 Feb 1890, IBEA File 54.
101. Salim, Swahili-Speaking Peoples.., pp.76-9.

well as powers of arrest(102). These officials were supposed to be governing the Muslim subjects of the Sultan, but inevitably their powers spread more widely than that, and included numbers of Mijikenda.

Their use in this way reflected initial British appreciations of the extent of Arab influence on the coast. The IBEA Company had attempted to secure its claim to the coast by signing a treaty with the Mazrui, who had signed on behalf of the Mijikenda(103). The influence of the Arab officials was much appreciated by the European administrators of the local hinterland. They found that while they themselves were unable to collect tax with any success, use of the liwalis and mudirs in the same task was more effective. The Mombasa Collector noted that 'the placing of a mudir at Changamwe is already giving good results. A revenue of Rs 233 has resulted'(104). Mudirs were used in clearly non-Muslim areas, as far as Rabai sub-district, to collect tax from Mijikenda(105). Liwalis and mudirs had an influence, and a degree of local knowledge, far beyond that of their British colleagues.

Despite the evident usefulness of this system, it did not endure. Already by 1905, some liwaliships had been downgraded to mudirships(106), and in 1907 and 1908 European officials were trying to end the use of Arab officials in Mijikenda areas as tax collectors(107).

102. ibid.
103. Mackenzie - Directors, 1 Dec 1888, IBEA File 1a.
104. Collector - Sub-Commr, 7 Aug 1906, KNA PC Coast 1/1/138.
105. Ag Collector - Sub-Commr, 17 Jan 1905, KNA PC Coast 1/1/99.
106. Salim, Swahili-Speaking Peoples.., p.93.
107. Ag DC Vanga - PC, 18 Dec 1907; and ADC Msa - DC Msa, 14 Dec 1908, both in KNA PC Coast 1/1/138.

Consequent difficulties in the collection of tax led Hemsted, acting PC during Hobley's temporary absence, to consider reintroducing the system in 1910(108), but this policy was not pursued.

It has been suggested that this change was part of the general transfer of official interest and concentration away from the coast, part of an increasing disillusionment with the economic possibilities of the area(109). Yet this deliberate down-grading of contacts between Muslim officials and Mijikenda was more than that. It came at a time when concern was growing about the labour problem on the coast, and when the debate on this subject among officials had come to focus on a particular issue.

To a large extent, the shortage of labour was a result of the alternatives to which Mijikenda had access through networks of kin and debt. Some Europeans had identified the root of the labour problem as somehow lying within the relationship of Mijikenda, Swahili and Arab. In the idiom of the time, this was not expressed through a suggestion that Africans were seeking better terms from non-European employers. Instead, it was an awareness expressed in images of the Muslims as idle and deceitful - the danger of the coastal Muslim corrupting the African in town was already commonly evoked in complaints against labour agents, and in 1906 the newspaper referred to labour being 'contaminated by the evil example of the Mombasa loafer'(110). The image of a corrupting influence was extended to contacts in the hinterland. In 1916 the DC of Vanga District said of the Digo;

108. Ag PC - DC Msa, 22 Jan 1910, KNA PC Coast 1/1/159
109. Salim, Swahili-Speaking peoples.., p.93.
110. EAS(W), 27 Oct 1906.

> The further they are removed from Swahili influence the more industrious they become; close contact with the coast residents is most prejudicial and they generally appear to adopt the slothful inertia of the Mohamedan(111)

The perceived need to protect the Mijikenda from idle and cheating Muslims was cited again and again after 1912. In 1913 Hobley instructed the ADC of Shimoni (Vanga) District that 'arrangements must be made by which no Arab official is to have dealings with the concrete tribes such as Digo, Duruma etc.'(112). The characterisation of the Digo as a 'concrete' tribe is a revealing one: the root of the administration's objections to the Swahili was that they were not sufficiently concrete to be controllable. Hobley also told the Shimoni ADC that

> It must be realised that it is not in our interest or in that of the people that the Mohamedan faith and the sheria [Muslim law] should spread among the aboriginal tribes(113)

Islam was seen to be a part of the corrupting and enervating influence of the Swahili and Arabs. The need to 'protect' the Mijikenda from the Swahili was projected back into history, with the slave-trade becoming a particularly powerful tool in this discourse. In 1913, mocking the idea that Arabs or Swahili might have been long present in the Kidutani area, among the Jibana, a judge declared:

111. Vanga District Annual report, 1915-16, p.7, KNA DC KWL/1/1
112. PC - ADC Shimoni, 2 March 1913, KNA DC KWL 3/3.
113. PC - ADC Shimoni, 12 March 1913, KNA DC KWL 3/3.

> ..there was naturally little in common between the pagan Jibana and the Mohammedan Arab who brought[sic] and sold their children into slavery(114)

The reduction in administrative contacts between Mijikenda and Arabs presaged a more determined attempt to reduce their physical contacts, to separate the coastal towns and a narrow coastal plantation strip from the land behind them and push the Mijikenda to one side of this divide and Swahili and Arabs to the other. Like the expulsion of the Giriama from the Trans-Sabaki to the north, this policy was a result of the report of the 1912 Commission.

The policy began with the creation of two separate forms of administration. On Mombasa island, there was no council of elders or tribunal gazetted by the government, but in Changamwe, Mtongwe, Jomvu, on the mainland that fringed the island, there existed councils of elders along the lines of those recognised by government for the Mijikenda. Similarly, among some of the Mijikenda the mudirs and liwalis had considerable influence and Islamisation, particularly among the Digo, had increased the power of the Muslim courts and administration of the coast. From 1913 to 1915, the withdrawal of Arab officials from contact with the Mijikenda was accompanied by the abolition of the elders and tribunals of the Mombasa periphery. First by Pearson, the ADC Rabai(115), and then by the DC of Mombasa, Beech, these councils were accused of corruption and inefficiency, but most of all of being inappropriate:

114. Hamilton, Judgement, 23 March 1914, Civil Case no 60 of 1913, Mombasa High Court, KNA PC Coast 1/11/209.
115. 'Rabai District Boundaries', Pearson, 1 Sept 1913, KNA DC KFI 3/2

> The Swahili have been ruled by the Arab for so long, it is doubtful if they retain the capability of looking after themselves properly. It is certain that they remember nothing of their original native customs(116)

The Mijikenda, on the other hand, were to be made to remember their 'native customs'. In 1915 Dundas, an old friend of Hobley from their time in Ukambani who had succeeded Beech as DC of Mombasa(117), toured among the many Digo who were at that time still within the same administrative area as Mombasa. He extracted from the elders of these areas a number of signed documents, their contents apparently dictated by him, in which they declared that they did not wish to be governed by Muslim law in any thing, though many of them were professed Muslims. Dundas happily noted that 'the retention of a system of law common and acceptable to the whole tribe will do much to facilitate its administration'(118). To back up his assertions that both Muslim and non-Muslim Digo were 'essentially Wanyika' and should be administered as such(119), Dundas produced an account of Digo custom, which, in dramatic contradiction to all previous and subsequent accounts, suggested that the the Digo had been ruled by a council headed by a single executive(120). Whereas Watkins, only eighteen months earlier, had seen the denial of individual freehold to the Digo as a temporary measure largely dictatd by the

116. 'Memo on native councils at Changamwe and Jomvu Kwa Shehe', DC Msa, 30 July 1914, KNA DC MSA 3/4.
117. CCF Dundas, African Crossroads, Westport 1976 (first 1955), p.16.
118. DC Msa - PC, 1 July 1915, KNA DC MSA 3/4; see the six statements by elders, dated 19 to 29 June 1915, attached to this
119. p.127, Political Record Book, KNA DC MSA 8/2
120. 'Digo Custom', Dundas, Jan 1916, KNA DC MSA 3/4.

administration's desperate need to free land for concessionaires(121), Dundas saw it as a long-term policy measure intended to mark off the Digo from the Swahili and Arabs, and he wrote of the importance of maintaining the 'Digo [non-Muslim] system of land tenure so beneficial to the tribe and of great advantage to the administration'(122).

The process of administrative separation culminated in the rearrangement between 1915 and 1919 of administrative boundaries on the coast. Mombasa District, which up until then had included Rabai sub-district to the west, extending out beyond Mariakani, and had stretched north nearly to Kilifi and south as far as Gasi, was drastically reduced. Malindi and Vanga Districts expanded south and north along the coast, but inland the northern part of the reserve was turned into an administrative area, 'Nyika Reserve', which contained most of the non-Digo Mijikenda. The boundary between Mombasa District and the Nyika Reserve, intended to be the new line between the Mijikenda and the Arabs and Swahili, followed the edge of successfully claimed land(123). In 1916, the mudirship of Mtwapa was abolished, as part of the boundary changes(124).

These administrative changes became the basis for attempts to shift populations around, to evict people from one area and resettle them in another. In the 'Reserve', the main victims of this policy were the Swahili and Arab traders and planters, some settled and some itinerant. As

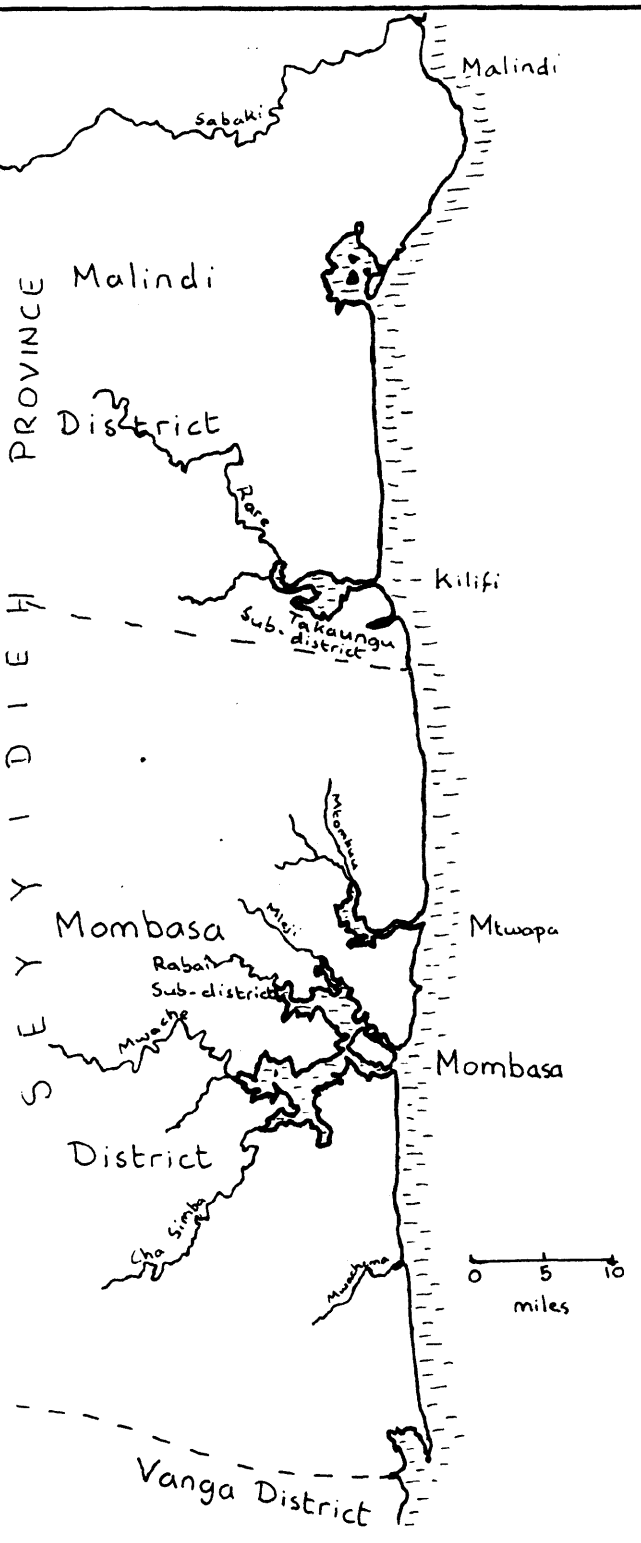
121. p.28 'Report on lands south of Mombasa', Watkins, 2 Dec 1913, KNA AG/4/2160
122. DC Msa - PC, 1 July 1915, KNA DC MSA 3/4
123. Ainsworth-Dickson, Note, 20 Aug 1919, KNA PC Coast 2/11/6
124. DC Malindi - PC, 16 March 1915, KNA PC Coast 2/11/1

early as 1909 the ADC Rabai had complained of their 'usury and other malpractices'(125), and proposed 'licensing every trader inside the Native reserve who cannot show that he is on the lands of his own tribe'(126). Traders of whom he disapproved could then be refused licences and expelled. The suggestion was not then taken up, but in 1915-17 a new policy with the same ends was instituted: that of centralising trade in controlled areas. In arguing for this policy, Hobley and others accused the traders of cheating the Mijikenda, and, significantly, of taking Mijikenda women to town with them - the movement on which so many of the coast's networks were based.

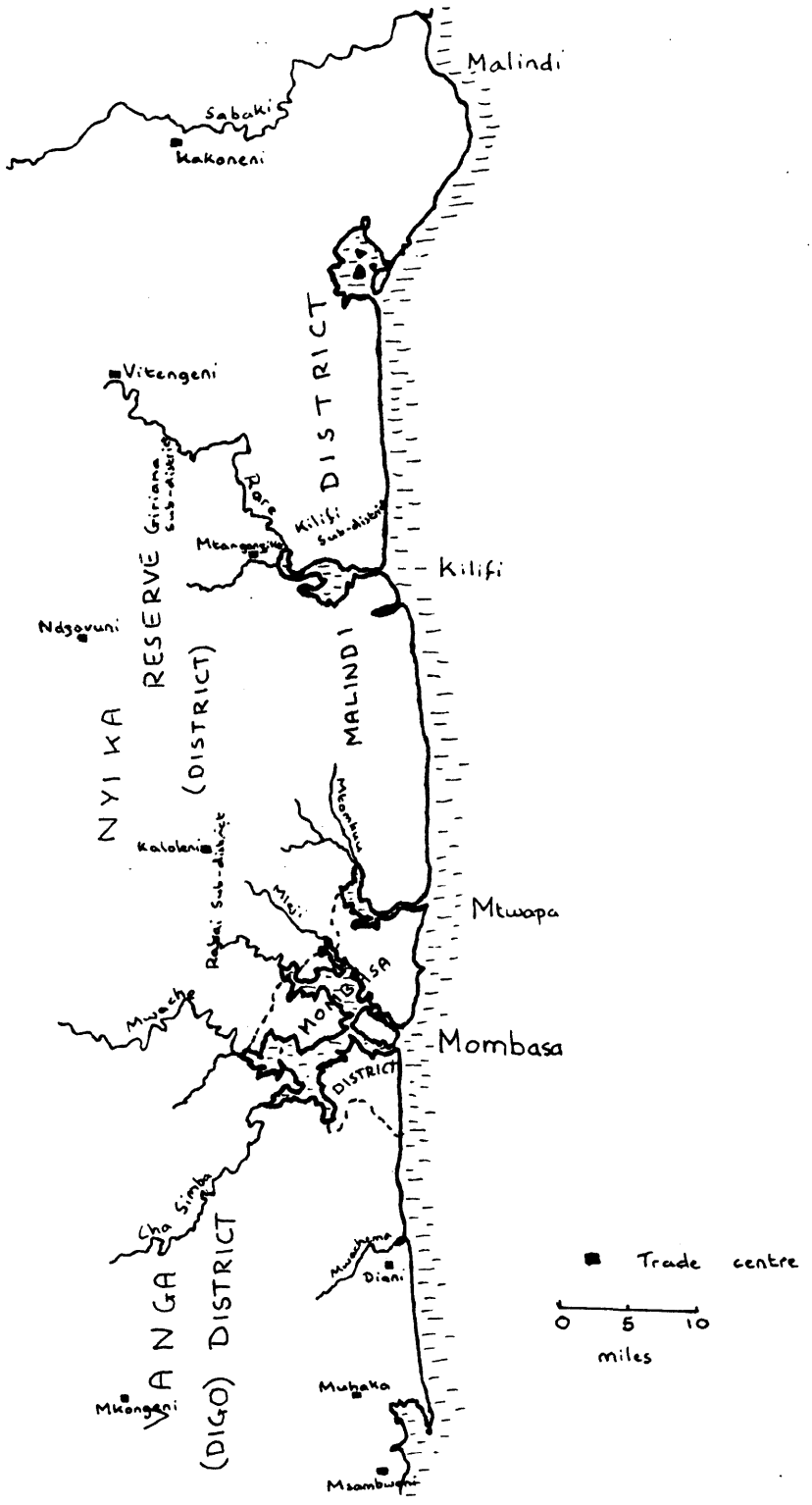
> The market system is not a popular one with the Arabs and wa-Swahili who wish to be allowed to wander through the Reserve and trade wherever opportunity occurs. This latter method is undesirable as the Wa-Nyika are apt to be swindled. Further one of the objects is to secure Wa-Nyika women..(127)

Another official wrote of the traders that 'they eke out a precarious existence on what they can cheat out of the mainland native'(128), and they were banned in 1915 as a war-time measure, with the stated intent that this ban would in fact be continued after the war(129). It was illegal to occupy land in a native reserve without permission and these traders and planters could be, and were, ordered to leave. One Twelve Tribes member was inaccurately but forcefully told in 1922 that 'You being an Arab are in unlawful occupation of land set aside for

125. ADC Rabai - DC Msa, 25 Nov 1909, KNA PC Coast 1/12/53
126. ibid.
127. Takaungu Sub-District Annual Report, 1916-17, KNA DC KFI 1/1.
128. Vanga District Annual Report, 1915-16, p.8, DC KWL 1/1.
129. ibid.



ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES, SEYYIDIEH (COAST) PROVINCE, 1895-1915



ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS AND TRADING CENTRES, 1920

the Nyika tribes'(130). Administrators pursued a veritable vendetta against these planters and traders(131), whose presence in Mijikenda areas was constantly asserted to be a recent development, and to be a threat to the Mijikenda themselves(132). The traders showed considerable determination to keep going into the reserves(133).

The process became bound up with that of land registration. In Tiwi, south of Mombasa, only those non-Digo who proved title to land were to be allowed to stay(134). The proving of title to land could, as we have noted, be extremely difficult. Incidentally, the DC announced that any Digo who claimed land would be considered to be Swahili since, as as he argued, the Digo did not recognise individual freehold in land(135). Having announced that they were non-Digo by claiming land, such people would be liable to expulsion if their claims were not accepted.

These traders were replaced by a system of government-gazetted and controlled 'trading centres', one for each area, where plots were rented out under the watchful eye of the administration and where shop-keepers could not own land at all. Hobley followed up the decision to expel the itinerant traders by pushing through the creation of a

130. Notice to Quit, DC - Said bin Sheikh, 9 June 1922, KNA PC Coast 1/14/177
131. Rabai Safari Diary, 22 Nov 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/18/182; Kilifi Station Diary, 30 March 1926, KNA PC Coast 1/1/443; Kilifi Intelligence Report, April 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/17/13.
132. Ag DC Kilifi - SCC, 10 Aug 1922, KNA PC Coast 1/14/177.
133. Kilifi Station Diary, 28 March 1926, KNA PC Coast 1/1/443
134. Sperling, 'The growth of Islam..', pp.119-20.
135. ibid.

number of these centres, arguing that 'For administrative reasons I am desirous to found these centres for I am convinced that it is the only way in which the natives will be able to obtain a fair price for their produce'(136). Despite initial hesitation on the part of the Attorney-General as to whether the Outlying Districts Ordinance, the relevant legislation, had legal force on the coast(137), the Trade Centres came into being, the DC of Vanga District enthusiastically affirming that they 'are of great assistance to the ignorant native of the hinterland who is otherwise at the mercy of any peddling coast native'(138). As intended, these Trade Centres came to serve as rural market centres outside the control of Arabs and Swahili. The capital requirements of paying a lease, and of building and stocking a shop, discouraged the Arabs and Swahili who had previously settled and traded, most of whom were themselves in debt to Mombasan Arabs or Indians. The close official scrutiny of the Trade Centres threatened their lending activities (some of which were theoretically illegal under the Credit Trades Ordinance), and made impossible the illicit trade in ivory and skins which previously had been an irregular but important source of income(139). The shops in the trading centres were run by Muslims, many of whom were based in Mombasa - but they were Indian Muslims.

Unlike the Arabs and Swahili, these traders did not intermarry, nor did they encourage Mijikenda to join their particular, usually Shi'ite, sects of Islam. There was no blurring of ethnic lines here, no adoption of outsiders

136. PC - Chief Sec, 9 Feb 1917, KNA AG/4/407
137. Memo, AG - Chief Sec, nd 1917, KNA AG/4/407.
138. Vanga District Annual report, 1916-17, pp.27-28, KNA DC KWL 1/2.
139. Kilifi Intelligence Report, Sept 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/17/13.

into Indian households as workers who were also junior family members. There were several Indian employers in Mombasa, around whom particular forms of patronage did develop(140), but there were no Indian serangs, there was no real Indian element in the creation of Mombasa's casual labour networks. The creation of the trade centres did not lead to any dramatic improvement in producer prices for the Mijikenda, as Hobley had suggested that it would: prices continued to be poor, and indebtedness to Indian traders increased as that to Swahili and Arabs decreased (141). What the trade centre policy did do was to eliminate the aspect of incorporative patronage in such indebtedness. Outside Mombasa, on the mainland, some Arab and Swahili planters and traders did survive, around Kilifi, Mtwapa and Mwakirunge, and to the south at Ng'ombeni(142), but their influence and the area of their activities were reduced.

As a corollary of this, the period after 1912 saw attempts to expel from areas outside the Nyika Reserve those Mijikenda, particularly Giriama, who were not in employ . Before 1912, officials had expressed concern that Mijikenda were occupying the coastal strip north of Mombasa; 'I came across several Wanyika squatters cultivating shambas well within the 10-mile limit, where they really have no legal right to settle'(143). Having deprived the Mijikenda of the right to own land, officials, particularly Hobley, sought to deprive them of the easy access to the land of others which they enjoyed.

140. Int 47a, 34a.
141. Memo, 'The development of the coast', 1922, KNA PC Coast 1/1/165
142. Native Council Minutes, 8 Feb 1927, KNA PC Coast 1/12/281
143. Registrar of Slaves - PC, 31 Oct 1910, KNA PC Coast 1/11/363.

In 1914, following the Giriama Rising, the expulsion of all Giriama from Malindi District was begun. In response to requests from 'Arab and Swahili' land-owners the DC Malindi, Skene, had asked the PC's permission for non-Giriama Mijikenda squatters to stay in the District, arguing that these squatters would 'form a valuable labour nucleus if the shambas are purchased by European planters'(144). Hobley despatched his assistant, Hemsted, who helped Skene prepare a form which land-owners were to use to register their squatters. The form specifically promised that the land-owner would hand squatters over to the government for labour on request(145). Giriama, meanwhile, were only to be allowed in Malindi District by special permission of the DC and were liable to immediate expulsion if they could not produce evidence of such permission(146). Giving instructions for the preparation of the squatters' form, Hobley warned that

> ..these little settlements may become a collecting centre for larger numbers of irreconcilables, who are under no tribal authority, and the lazy Arab shamba owners may drift into the position of kaffir farmers(147)

When Beech took over the post of DC Malindi and asked for permission to settle a number of Mijikenda on coast lands(148), Hobley was very much opposed to the idea, suggesting that Mijikenda should only stay in the district as estate labourers(149). Again, Hobley argued that such

144. DC Malindi - PC, 30 Nov 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/12/68
145. See form attached to DC Malindi - PC, 10 Dec 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/12/68.
146. DC Malindi - PC, 10 Dec 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/12/68
147. PC - Hemsted, 4 Dec 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/12/68
148. DC Malindi - PC, 22 Oct 1915, KNA PC Coast 1/11/236
149. PC - DC Malindi, 13 Nov 1915, KNA PC Coast 1/11/236

people were essentially in the wrong place, that they belonged in the reserve where there was land 'which Government is quite prepared to dedicate to the use of their tribe'(150). Beech, meanwhile, was recommending the expulsion of a group of Giriama who had been given to permission to settle in the district, but who had refused to repay this kindness by supplying porters(151). In 1916, the Acting DC reaffirmed that

> Owing to the undisciplined state of the wa-Giriama the policy is to keep them inside their native reserve under tribal authority, and they may only settle outside as labourers on private lands or for private employment(152)

So, while the Swahili and Arabs were held to be too deceitful to live among the Mijikenda, the Giriama were said to be too wild to live among the Muslims of the coast, and Hobley worried that other Mijikenda would become 'lazy' under the influence of coast-dwellers.

The expulsion of the Mijikenda from the coastal lands was never actually completed: lacking administrative staff and policemen, the PC and DCs could do little to enforce the policies which they so boldly formulated. It was not only that the Giriama Rising had made the administration reluctant to push matters, as Cooper suggests(153), for a number of the anti-squatter policies were formulated after

150. ibid
151. DC Malindi - PC, 14 July 1915, KNA PC Coast 1/11/266
152. Ag DC Malindi - PC, 10 Oct 1916; Ag DC Malindi - ADC Giriama, 28 Oct 1916, and PC - DC Malindi, 4 Oct 1916, all in KNA PC Coast 1/11/266.
153. Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters.., p.224

this event. It was rather that the administration realised that it was unable to enforce such measures. Beech announced as early as 1915 that he could not prevent the return of the Giriama to the north of the Sabaki, though he continued to attempt to do so(154). The Giriama were, as the administration had feared, building new networks to secure access to this land.

> I understand that very considerable numbers of Wanyika since their removal from N[orth] of the Sabaki are daily being received into the Mohamedan faith in order that, being henceforth Mahaji, they may settle on 'potential' Arab lands north of the Sabaki(155)

Though the policy of physical separation was not effectively enforced, it continued to be considered important. Even in 1917, when the food shortage caused by the First World War led to a new enthusiasm for African food production throughout British East Africa(156), the plans for the Mijikenda to grow food on coast lands were intended to increase controls on squatters, not reduce them. A scheme for the registration of Mijikenda as labourers, but also as individual farmers, on the lands of others was put forward(157). The administration was ready for the first time to accept Mijikenda as producers on coast land, yet to win this acceptance the Mijikenda would have to register, pay rents and market their goods through the DC(158).

154. DC Malindi - PC, 15 May 1915, KNA PC Coast 1/11/236
155. ibid.
156. Memo, Admr of Native Affairs, 30 Jan 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/10.
157. PC - Chief Sec, 10 Aug 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/2/10.
158. ibid.

In effect, the scheme accepted that there would be a degree of settlement by Mijikenda in the coastal plain, but by charging rent and registering squatters, it sought to make this an expensive undertaking, and one that was essentially short-term, under official control, and reversible. Lands on the coast were only to be temporarily rented, under the control of European officials, and the development of any complex ties of patronage was to be forestalled by the administration taking control of the marketing of produce. The charging of rent would force squatters to produce for the market or seek wage labour, and the coastal plain would no longer be a comfortable refuge from the demands of headmen for labour and taxes.

Though the administration gave some support to the scheme, it was never enforced. Landowners were quick to express their lack of enthusiasm(159), perhaps suspecting that the administration itself would be unable to effectively police the system, and that attempts to charge rent would simply cause the Mijikenda already living on their lands to flee to other land. This they wished to avoid, for they could at least rely on these squatters as a source of occasional casual labour in picking nuts or clearing ground. Most landowners had no real incentive to try and take control of their land, for they did not have the capital to use the land except for the sort of casual harvesting of coconuts which those who could were already pursuing. The settlement of Mijikenda on the lands outside the Reserve, temporarily or permanently, continued unabated and unsupervised.

In their attempts to expel the Giriama from the coastal plain, the PC and the DC Malindi had called on the Giriama

159. Ag DC Gazi - PC, 1 Oct 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/2/10.

headmen to assist them(160). Like the headmen among other Mijikenda groups, these had been gazetted as part of a long and, for the administration, frustrating search for Mijikenda figures of authority. Though some officials had realised early on that there was no effective central authority among any Mijikenda group(161), others had continued to try and find such figures, and members of the administration often referred to Mijikenda 'chiefs'(162). After the initial willingness to rely on the influence of the Muslim administration on the Mijikenda, there had already before 1912 been attempts to discover other figures of authority(163). From 1913, these attempts intensified, as local officials anxious to govern the Mijikenda by a political system entirely separate from that of the coast tried to identify and perpetuate such a structure. In his work south of Mombasa, Dundas wrote, 'it is a mistake to regard the Wadigo or any section of them as Mohamedans from the point of view of administrative policy, they are essentially Wanyika'(164). The determined search for and bolstering of traditional forms of government which he undertook among the Digo was paralleled among other Mijikenda groups. The search for traditional rulers offered opportunities for considerable invention by those Mijikenda to whom officials turned for advice, some of whom tended to describe traditional structures of government which offered advantages to them as individuals(165).

160. PC - DC Malindi, 4 Oct 1916, KNA PC Coast 1/11/266.
161. ADC Rabai - PC, 4 Oct 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/12/42.
162. PC - MacDougall, 16 June 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/1/141.
163. p.59. Vol I, Political Record Book, KNA DC KWL 3/5.
164. p. 127, Political Record Book, KNA DC MSA 8/2
165. Compare 'The Wadigo', CCF Dundas, in KNA DC KWL 3/5, with the discussion of role of zumbe and kubo in 'Wadigo Laws', attached, District Clerk, Shimoni - PC, 16 Sept 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/1/309; 'Notes on the Wadigo of Tanga', 19 Dec 1928, KNA DC KWL 3/5. For a similar case see ADC Rabai - PC, 5 Oct 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/9/52.

This reached its most extreme form among the Duruma. In 1913 an intense dispute had arisen over who should be appointed by the British as leader of the Duruma(166). The dispute rumbled on in the form of conflicting reports to the administration as to the nature of traditional power(167), until in 1923 the appointed headman was forced by the administration to resign and one Mwaiona wa Munga appointed as 'paramount head' of the Duruma(168). Mwaiona achieved this by persuading the DC that he alone was capable of conducting a set of initiations which would legitimise a new generation of elders through which the administration could govern. Having taken office, he consistently delayed performing this ceremony, and in the meantime he and the other existing elders amassed considerable wealth by consistent abuse of the power which the administration had, by the logic of its own position, been forced to give him(169). The initiations never took place.

The search for traditional rulers was generally unsuccessful. The Mijikenda were instead governed by the DC and such homestead heads as the DC saw fit to appoint as headmen. By the 1925-6 the search for a 'traditional' underpinning to this system was being abandoned(170), as the government turned instead to bolstering the power of approved elders through the creation of the Local Native Councils. Though intended to encourage Mijikenda into contract wage labour, the appointment of these headmen

166. 'Notes on Waduruma in Vanga District', nd, p.68, Political Record Book, KNA DC KWL 3/5
167. APC - PC, 18 July 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/3/114
168. Minutes of Duruma Baraza, 16 Nov 1927, KNA DC KWL 3/5
169. Digo Station Diary, March 1924, p.6; Digo Station Diary, Dec 1924, p.6, KNA DC KWL 5/1; also SCC Office Diary, 12 Feb 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/1/417.
170. Digo District AR, 1925, p.6

had tended to exacerbate tensions within Mijikenda society, and in the short term to encourage Mijikenda to flee to Mombasa and there to join the growing casual and informal labour force of the town(171).

* * *

The impact of these measures was not entirely that intended by the administration. They had been framed within a discourse which emphasised the importance of maintaining a complete divide between town and hinterland by identifying town-dwellers as a separate group, more civilised but more dishonest and idle than the hinterland peoples. The coast's labour problems were seen as a result of the town-dwellers corrupting and cheating the people of the hinterland, and so administrative policies were directed towards separating the two groups, physically and administratively. Yet this did not immediately end the actual closeness of town and hinterland, and most importantly it did not produce a new flow of willing Mijikenda labour. Rather it produced a renegotiation of the terms of involvement in the networks through which Mijikenda found alternatives to contract labour, or the creation of entirely new networks .

The legislation on palm-wine had by the 1920s limited the involvement of Mijikenda individuals as sellers of palm-wine, and reduced the income a homestead in Rabai or Digo could once have earned from producing palm-wine. Yet this did not lead many Rabai to seek contract labour. Partly this resulted from the continued illicit marketing of palm-wine by some homesteads(172). It was also a sign

171.See chapter 2, above
172. Int 39a, 36a; also Affidavit, Paya wa Jabu, in KNA PC Coast 1/14/189.

of the growth of a sector of the casual labour market which the Rabai dominated: tapping palm-wine in Mombasa. The difficulties of preventing coconut theft had already prompted some of the larger coastal landowners to turn their palm plantations over to wine production(173). Restrictions on sales of wine, and the tapping licence introduced in 1921, encouraged the concentration of palm-wine production in larger plantations, on Mombasa island, and in Changamwe, and Junda - and for large plantation owners, palm-wine became and for some years remained by far the mostprofitable use of their resources, far more so than was the selling of whole nuts or of copra(174). By the 1930s, Arab entrepreneurs were leasing land from Arab and Swahili landlords and using them to produce palm-wine(175) - which they then sold to club-owners or, after 1934, to the Municipality(176).

These landowners relied on Rabai or Digo as tappers - a dominance that began because the Rabai and Digo were those who knew most about tapping(177). Other Mijikenda, let alone up-country Africans, knew neither how to climb a palm tree nor how to tap without ruining the tree. Once established, the nature of recruitment maintained this dominance. Workers squatted on the estates of their employer, and were at first paid on a half and half share system: they took the proceeds of half the amount that was tapped and sold(178). Later, payment was made according to a flat rate for each gourd of palm-wine produced, no

173. Int 61a.
174. Int 61b; also comments of Ali bin Salim, in minutes of 'Conference convened to discuss the Coconut Ordinances', 20 Oct 1920, KNA PC Coast 1/1/165.
175. Int 36a, 61a.
176. Int 43b.
177. Int 43a.
178. Int 43a.

matter
what the tree-owner realised on its sale(179). Workers did not sign contracts, and had no fixed term of employ, but were expected by their employer to provide a replacement for themselves when they left - and for this they often turned to a relative from their homestead in Rabai, a brother or cousin(180).

This employment was far more a part of the homestead economy than was other casual work in the period before 1925. The tappers, indeed, considered that they had not left the homestead:

> I was living here in Rabai..for sleeping, I slept there, at the end of the month when I left, my mate would come. End of the month, when you go, your mate comes, I come back here...at the end of the month, I went down and relieved my mate again(181)

Employment was not through town networks, not reliant on identification with life in the town, but was through the ties of homestead and Mijikenda clan. While some plantation-owners established special links with some Rabai(182), they seem to have done this with entire Rabai homesteads, not with individuals who left the homestead and became dependent on new patrons. Most of these tappers returned to their homesteads regularly, some interspersing a few months of work with a few months, or even years, of life in the homestead(183). These tappers were truly migrant workers, who did not become 'lost', or Swahili. Like other Mijikenda, they were avoiding the jobs which

179. Int 36a
180. Int 36a, 32a
181. Int 32a, p.2
182. Int 36a
183. Int 43a, 43b

they did not want to do, but for them, economic alternatives were available through networks to which they had access through their ethnicity as Rabai, and their membership of the homestead.

> Rabai didn't want these jobs, being ordered about; a Rabai doesn't like to be ordered about, a job being told, 'do this! do this!' They don't want it.. ..There [Mombasa] the ones who were many were the Giriama. They can't tap. The ones who were many, Duruma. They can't tap. But Rabai, they don't want that work, they want to tap(184)

The Rabai experience of the Mombasa labour market was different from that of other Mijikenda; the pattern of networks in tapping heralded changes that were to come for other Mijikenda, but the Rabai specialisation in tapping continued to keep them out of other types of labour.

Just as palm-wine legislation produced new networks, so too did that affecting traders. The banning of traders from the reserves did not immediately end their activities, partly because, despite the efforts of the administration, Mijikenda, Swahili and Arabs continued to live in close proximity in a number of areas. One result of the legislation seems to have been an expansion in the use of agents. Mombasan traders had for years used Mijikenda agents and foremen, to trade on their behalf and oversee plantations for them(185), and with the banning of the traders from the reserves these agents assumed a new importance. When someone sought to borrow money by mortgaging property, it was the agent who inspected and estimated the value of the land, and they who lived upon

184. Int 31a, p.3
185. Sperling, 'The growth of Islam..', p.119; Int 9a

it or regularly visited it, and ensured that fruits were harvested(186).

In 1919, the issue of Mijikenda indebtedness to traders was raised again(187). A flurry of communication resulted, the DC Kilifi noting that 'many natives, and especially the Headmen, were so deeply in debt that it was quite impossible for them to pay'(188), and that, 'it is manifest that the natives of the District have passed into a condition of economic servitude to the Traders'(189). By 1920 legislation to strengthen the existing Credit Trades Ordinance of 1902 had been drafted, extending that ordinance to cover the trade in foodstuffs and requiring the registration of the terms of advances(190).

The administration, however, found that Indian traders on the coast and in gazetted Trading Centres inland were as active in making advances and securing indebted clients as their unregulated predecessors had been; indeed it became clear that the intended ordinance would affect these people far more than it would the diminishing number of traders outside the Trading Centres(191). Mijikenda were meeting their needs for money by taking advances from these traders for crops which they would later sell, borrowing money from them to buy crops for trade, or taking advances on work to be performed, such as wood-cutting(192).

186. Int 26c
187. Ag DC Malindi - PC, 22 Sept 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/19/1
188. DC Kilifi - Ag PC, 17 June 1920, KNA PC Coast 1/19/1
189. ibid; see also DC Malindi - Ag PC, 7 may 1920; Ag PC - CNC, 8 Oct 1919, AG - CNC, 13 April 1920, all in KNA PC Coast 1/19/1
190. Ag DC Kilifi - Ag PC, 28 Jan 1920, KNA PC Coast 1/19/1
191. Ag DC Vanga - PC, 3 Aug 1918; Ag DC Malindi - PC, 22 Sept 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/19/1.
192. Ag DC Malindi - PC, 3 Aug 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/19/1.

The draft ordinance was never proceeded with. Fazan, the DC who had begun the debate, became concerned that new legislation would deprive traders of legitimate profits and of their defence against breach of contract(193). Aware that the credit trade was not the preserve of the Arab and Swahili traders whom the administration had tried so hard to ban, the PC recommended abandoning the legislation(194). There was, though, an attempt to limit the use of Muslim courts, which Arabs and Swahili creditors were using to uphold their claims to the produce of Mijikenda debtors(195). The debate over the credit trade clearly suggests how different were administrative attitudes to Indian and Swahili or Arab traders. Indian traders, as already noted, did not carry for these officials the same dangerous implications of a corrupting idleness and a blurring of ethnic boundaries that those of Arab or Swahili traders did. The essential difference between the Indian traders of the 1920s and the Arab and Swahili traders who had been banned only a few years before lay not in their lending activities, but in the implications of these for the labour supply on the coast. The effect of Indian dominance of the hinterland trade was not immediately to push the Mijikenda into wage labour, but the changed circumstances of these rural networks were to have increasing influence on the opportunities open to Mijikenda in the later 1920s.

The policy of separating the town from its hinterland which Hobley pursued so vigorously from 1913 had no immediate effect on the flow of Mijikenda labour to

193. DC Malindi -Ag PC, 7 May 1920 and 17 June 1920, KNA PC Coast 1/19/1
194. Ag PC - CNC, 29 June 1920, KNA PC Coast 1/19/1.
195. ibid.

Mombasa or the plantations. During the First World War, the shortage of labour at the port became chronic. The shipping companies had found it easier to get labour than had other European concerns, because of their preference for casual labour, but the irregularity of this labour caused problems: 'the business of handling cargo was on a bad footing before the war and the Port always had a bad name for handling cargo'(196). The problems were magnified in the war, not only by the greater volume of traffic but by the transfer of all non-military traffic to the Mombasa harbour, away from Kilindini(197): the European shipping companies seem always to have been less than confident about their control of labour in the Mombasa harbour(198).

The dock labour force at this time was definitely a 'town' one, composed of Africans and 'Shihiri' - recently arrived Arabs from the Hadramaut, who quickly became established within the networks of the town and played a significant part in the casual labour force, as water-carriers and dock-workers. The networks of these Hadrami workers seem often to have overlapped with those of the other workers(199); there were no separate and exclusively Hadrami serangs, but the Hadrami, unlike the African workers, stayed Hadrami - they did not become Swahili. 'The hamals are mixed part Swahili and part Shihiri', wrote the PC in 1916(200). The problem of making this 'mixed' labour force work was becoming acute - in 1916,

196. PC - Chief Sec, 1 Aug 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/42; see also EAS (W), 8 July 1911, 2 Sept 1911.
197. Memo, Military Commissioner for Labour, 18 July 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/42.
198. See Chapter 4.
199. Int 53a.
200. PC - Director, Military Labour, 16 April 1916, KNA PC Coast 1/9/42.

the average daily need was only for 386 workers, but though there were considerably over a thousand casuals who sometimes worked at the dock, there were often not enough workers on any given day. The PC fulminated against the agents who controlled the dockers and demanded a high price for their labour(201), but the shipping companies, who employed the stevedores, and the Railway, who employed the shorehandlers, were unable to directly challenge the serangs by dispensing with their services. Instead the government began a registration scheme, and by June 1917 only 791 porters retained their registration, many others having been struck off the register for irregular working:

> The men now on the books are all genuine labourers and during the past month have worked an average of 10 days per month as against a previous average of less than 2 days(202)

It says much for the freedom which the dock-workers had won for themselves that ten days labour a month was considered satisfactory, at a time when other African workers were on a month measured by a thirty-working-day ticket. From the administration's point of view, worse was to come: by September, an average of only one hundred workers a day were turning out(203), and in February 1918 the PC reported that

> ..although there are about 800 hamals registered on the books of the Port Labour bureau the average number of days which each man has worked on cargo during the last few months is only four per

201. PC - Chief Sec, 9 Feb 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/42.
202. DC Msa - PC, 18 June 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/42
203. DC Msa - PC, 12 Dec 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/42

month(204)

It seems that the scheme had partly broken down because the companies were continuing to employ unregistered labour(205). This was not necessarily a wilful contravention of the law. As the dispute with the boat-men had shown five years before, the enforcement of registration and regular working on a casual labour force was not easily compatible with a system whereby the organisation, and the daily mobilisation of this labour force, was left to networks completely outside the control of the employer. The threat of deregistration held little terror for the dock labour force, since the serangis' continuing control of daily hiring and firing meant that such threats could not actually be followed up without their help. The registration scheme was quietly forgotten.

These events, like the shortage of labour that continued to plague the plantations, showed that attempts to separate town and hinterland had yet to resolve the labour supply problems on the coast. The shortage of labour at the port coincided with the migration of many Mijikenda to Mombasa, Changamwe and Kisauni in the pishi moja famine of 1918(206) (so called because one pishi measure of maize cost one rupee, around six to eight times the normal price). Indeed, the unloading of famine relief maize made the shortage of dock labour more acute(207). Dock-work continued to be a preserve of permanent town-dwellers, and

204. PC - Chairman Famine Cttee, 14 Feb 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/6.
205. Hodges, The Carrier Corps.., p.97.
206. PC - Chairman, Famine Cttee., 28 June 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/6
207. PC - Chairman, Famine Cttee., 14 Feb 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/2/6

the migrants squatted on land on the mainland or worked as casual building labour(208). Neither the control of the casual labour force nor a regular supply of Mijikenda labour had yet been achieved.

In the early 1920s, Mombasa's labour force continued to be remarkably unregulated and beyond official control. The SCC wrote in 1924 that

> Mombasa labour is largely 'kibarua' and Personal Servants. I have no idea of the numbers but it is impossible to state what labour in Mombasa is permanently employed(209)

Complaints continued also about the shortage of labour on the coast and the impossibility of obtaining Mijikenda workers(210). The lack of official control over the workforce and the continuing failure of the administration to limit the alternatives open to coastal people, to fix their identities and control their movement, was shown most dramatically during the introduction of the kipande, the Native Registration Certificate.

The Native Registration Ordinance was passed in 1915, but remained unenforced throughout British East Africa until after the war(211). It was, essentially, a labour control measure. Africans who left the reserves were required to carry with them a certificate, which soon became known as a kipande, bearing their name, and an identity number, and carrying details of their employment record. Africans

208. Int 54a, 46a
209. Ag SCC - CNC, 1 April 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/9/52
210. Kilifi District AR, 1920-21, p.12, KNA PC Coast 1/1/412
211. Clayton and Savage, Government and Labour..

could be arrested for not carrying such a certificate, and those who had deserted from employment would not have their certificates 'signed off' by their last employer and so could be identified from the details and punished. Used in conjunction with the Vagrancy Ordinance of 1920, which made it an offence for Africans to be outside the reserves 'not having any visible means of subsistence'(212), the Native Registration Ordinance provided the legal framework for the end of the casual and informal labour practices which dominated in Mombasa. Yet, despite the continuing complaints of labour shortages on the coast, a meeting of coastal DCs and the PC in 1924 agreed to suspend the operation of the Ordinance on the coast(213).

The decision was presented as a generous administrative concession - either in recognition of the strains the war had placed on the Mijikenda(214) or because of the resistance of the Twelve Tribes Swahili to being registered as 'natives'(215). It was more of an acceptance of defeat. Officials elsewhere on the coast had complained that the situation in Mombasa rendered the Ordinance unworkable:

> It is useless for me to enforce the Ordinance in this district unless steps are taken to see that Mombasa comes into line. In every single instance where a Mombasa native comes to my office or into the district he leaves his certificate in Mombasa, as he states he never carries it in the Town, and did not know it was obligatory elsewhere(216)

212. Memo on the Vagrancy Ordinance, nd, PRO CO 533 389/9
213. SCC - CNC, 18 Dec 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/10/120B
214. ibid.
215. Mombasa District AR, 1924, pp.4-5, KNA DC MSA 1/3.
216. DC Kilifi, quoted in Chief Registrar - SCC, 27 March 1922, KNA PC Coast, KNA 1/10/120B

A special representative despatched by the Chief Registrar of Natives decided that enforcement within Mombasa was a hopeless task(217).

The new legislation had not changed the basic problem: several of the major employers in Mombasa were unwilling to meet the long-term costs of supporting a permanent labour force. Instead, they preferred to pay higher daily wages to a labour force which organised, housed and fed itself, and which developed its own institutions for these purposes. It was not only the shipping companies who followed this practice. Mombasa's small industrial sector preferred casual workers(218), as did the building, quarrying and portering industries(219). Certificates, numbers and laws were not the means of organising the workers, nor could they be in a situation where personal contact and recognition were the basis of employment. Within such an arrangement, there was no point at which the certificate of an individual labourer could be checked by their employer, and hence no systematic enforcement of the registration laws. Employers were not willing to cooperate in enforcing the registration laws, for the individual checking of cards involved would have destroyed the system of employment through gangs upon which they relied. The shipping companies and other employers continued to employ large numbers of casual labourers, some of whom were deserters from other employers, others of whom were moonlighting, and most of whom used the casual labour system to survive by doing as little waged labour as possible.

217. Dept of Native Affairs - SCC, 29 Sept 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/10/120B
218. EAS (D), 26 Nov 1936.
219. Int 71a, 20a, 47a.

The reluctance of all involved to face these issues was revealed in 1925. In 1924, following complaints by the Uganda Railway, the East African Lighterage Company was found guilty of employing as a casual labourer a worker who was absenting himself from his contracted work for the Railway(220). The following dispute was largely played out in the Mombasa District Committee, an advisory body whose members comprised government, private European employers, and the Liwali of Mombasa, the ubiquitous Ali bin Salim al-Busaidi. The Union Castle Company and the British India Steam Navigation Company, who owned the cargo-handling companies, were deeply alarmed at the prospect of further legal action, but even more alarmed at the prospect of having to take control of their workers for themselves, rather than relying on their serangs to produce labour(221). The upshot was the approval of a proposal by the shipping companies that a separate register of casual labour be kept by a government registrar - a scheme which offered shipping companies the advantage that they would not have to check the employment details of their casuals, for the policing of the scheme would be up to the administration. The other sweetener for the shipping companies was section 9.2:

> No registered casual labourer shall unreasonably refuse or fail to render his services to any employer who may require his services for the day or any portion thereof at the current rates of pay(222).

220. Minutes, Special Meeting of Port Advisory Board, 23 June 1924, KNA AG/4/2968.
221. Memo, Frudd, Union castle Mail SS Co. Ltd, nd, in KNA AG/4/2968.
222. 'Casual Labourers Employment Bill', draft in KNA AG/4/2968

In return for putting up with registration, the companies were to have the right to demand the labour of casuals. The proposal represented an attempt by the shipping companies to put the administration to work for them. It was also a victory for the shipping companies over other employers:

> Arab members in particular seem doubtful of the success of the scheme...I think the real objection comes from employers of daily labour working on gardens and plantations(223)

The conviction of the lighterage company was, however, overturned on appeal, and when Ainsworth-Dickson resumed his job as Resident Commissioner (DC) of Mombasa in 1925, he quickly ensured that the proposal was dropped(224). No-one was willing to face the casual labour issue directly, any more than they had been in 1912.

Labour in Mombasa was still organised through networks, and the Mijikenda continued to have privileged access to these networks through marriage and kinship. There were changes in these networks, though, changes which grew out of the changing nature of work in Mombasa and which gave opportunities to new patrons.

On the docks in particular, the steady shift in traffic from the old harbour to the western harbour of Kilindini seems to have coincided with the rise of one serang in particular, a man called Salim bin Ali. For a number of years he dominated the cargo-handling force at Kilindini through a number of lesser serangs and tindals(225). He

223. Fazan, Res Comm and Chair of District Cttee - Colonial Sec, 17 Oct 1924, KNA AG/4/2968.
224. Ainsworth-Dickson, Res Comm and Chair of District Cttee - Ag Colonial sec, 13 Aug 1925, KNA AG/4/2968
225. Int 71b, 26b.

was a Mijikenda by origin, a Chonyi(226), but from Junju, one of the areas where traders and planters had been active(227), and he was very much a man of the town - to the extent that many no longer remember his original ethnicity(228). He had abandoned all claims on and obligations to the homestead: his wages were invested in building houses in Mombasa, around Mwembe Tayari, and he never returned to Chonyi(229). Through the dance society which he led, he was at the centre of an enormous number of little networks through which many of the several thousand casuals who at one time or another worked as shorehandlers were organised(230). His status as the leading serang of the cargo-men was given official recognition by the shipping companies(231).

The rise of Salim bin Ali reflected something of a change in the nature of patronage within Mombasan society. Previously, those able to organise and market the labour of numbers of subordinates had mostly been Arabs or Twelve Tribes Swahili, often traders with considerable land and planting interests; men such as Rastam bin Talasam, of the Basheikh clan, who was the head of the 'Kingi' dance society, and was initially involved with the organisation of dock labour(232). Colonial rule offered new opportunities for existing patrons to exploit the labour of their followers, but it also allowed those lower down the social scale, such as Salim bin Ali, to build followings through knowledge of the town and employers, rather than through their own wealth. New

226. Int 71b
227. Sperling, 'The Growth of Islam...', pp. 52-4.
228. Int 26b.
229. Int 26b.
230. Int 71b, see also Chapter 6.
231. Int 26b, 71b.
232. Int 71b, 53a.

tensions were created within Mombasa, tensions partly played out in the continuing debate over ethnicity, a debate which was in turn to effect the structure of networks within Mombasa.

The failure of the administration to break down the networks which offered choices to workers in Mombasa, and on the coast generally, kept the price of labour in Mombasa high until the early 1920s: labour was still in considerable demand. At the same time, the cost of living, of the daily reproduction of labour, was high in Mombasa(233). Until the mid-1920s, the casual labour force continued to be characterised by its urban nature, though it was heterogeneous in origin; the workers were casuals, but they were not migrants, and the cost of their daily reproduction was not subsidised by the homestead. This was a point finally realised by the administration in the 1940s(234), but it had been true long before. While the informal economy of the town cared for waged workers, taking the direct cost of doing so away from their employers, the effect of this was actually to increase the cost of labour overall, for with their wages casual labourers were supporting a considerable army of hawkers, prostitutes, cooks and wood-cutters in the town.

Chauncey has argued of the situation in colonial Zambia that by shifting the costs of the daily, rather than the long-term, reproduction of labour onto women in the Copperbelt towns, employers reduced the cost to themselves of supporting that labour(235). The situation in Mombasa

233. p.174, KK Janmohamed, 'African Labourers in Mombasa' in Economic and Social History of East Africa, ed B Ogot, Nairobi 1976.
234. ibid pp.170-171.
235. G Chauncey, 'The Locus of Reproduction: women's labour in the Zambian Copperbelt, 1927-53', Journal of Southern African Studies, VII, 2, 1981, pp.135-164

was rather different, however, for here the women and men who worked in the casual and informal economy were generally not short-term migrants. The wage-earners were supporting both themselves and the rest of this population in long-term residence of the town, and women who had come to live in Mombasa may have cooked for and slept with workers, but they expected in return to receive money to buy food, water and firewood for themselves as well as their men. Male informants repeatedly stressed that these women would not perform all the work expected of women in the homestead.

> ...what use is a Mombasa wife?...she's a lazy woman who runs away and is taken in Mombasa, because she just wants to cook and eat, she doesn't want lots of work..they get there, they've reached the land of luxury, they're lost(236)

This was, after all, why women came to Mombasa - because it allowed them to renegotiate the terms of their participation in the domestic economy, to do less work. They, in turn, lived off the men's wages. 'Work? The work was young men', as one woman put it(237). A permanently urban male worker cared for by an urban wife might have been cheaper than a permanently urban worker not cared for by an urban wife, but he was certainly more costly than a migrant worker with a wife and family in the hinterland. Mombasa's workers earned more because they were townspeople, but they needed to earn more to be townspeople.

It was this that was, in the end, to change the nature of the labour market in Mombasa, combined as it was with

236. Int 43a, pp.4-5
237. Int 59a, p.3

new tensions and divisions between groups on the coast. The separation of the coastal strip and the hinterland did not immediately affect the supply of labour on the coast, for the administration failed to fully enforce this separation. Yet the legal framework laid down to allow this separation, while not used directly, did begin a more subtle and slow process of differentiation. By redefining, and fixing, the rights and rightful positions of Swahili, Arab and Mijikenda, this legislation put the Mijikenda as a group in a position where their interests could easily conflict with those of Swahili and Arabs. To speak of the relations of 'the Mijikenda' with 'the Swahili' before this time is perhaps anachronistic, for neither group was discrete or homogeneous and the complex relationships of the coast were built on this heterogeneity. But by the 1920s this was changing. 'Mijikenda' as a title was yet to be invented, but as a group defined by a separate area of residence and legal rights the Mijikenda were being created.

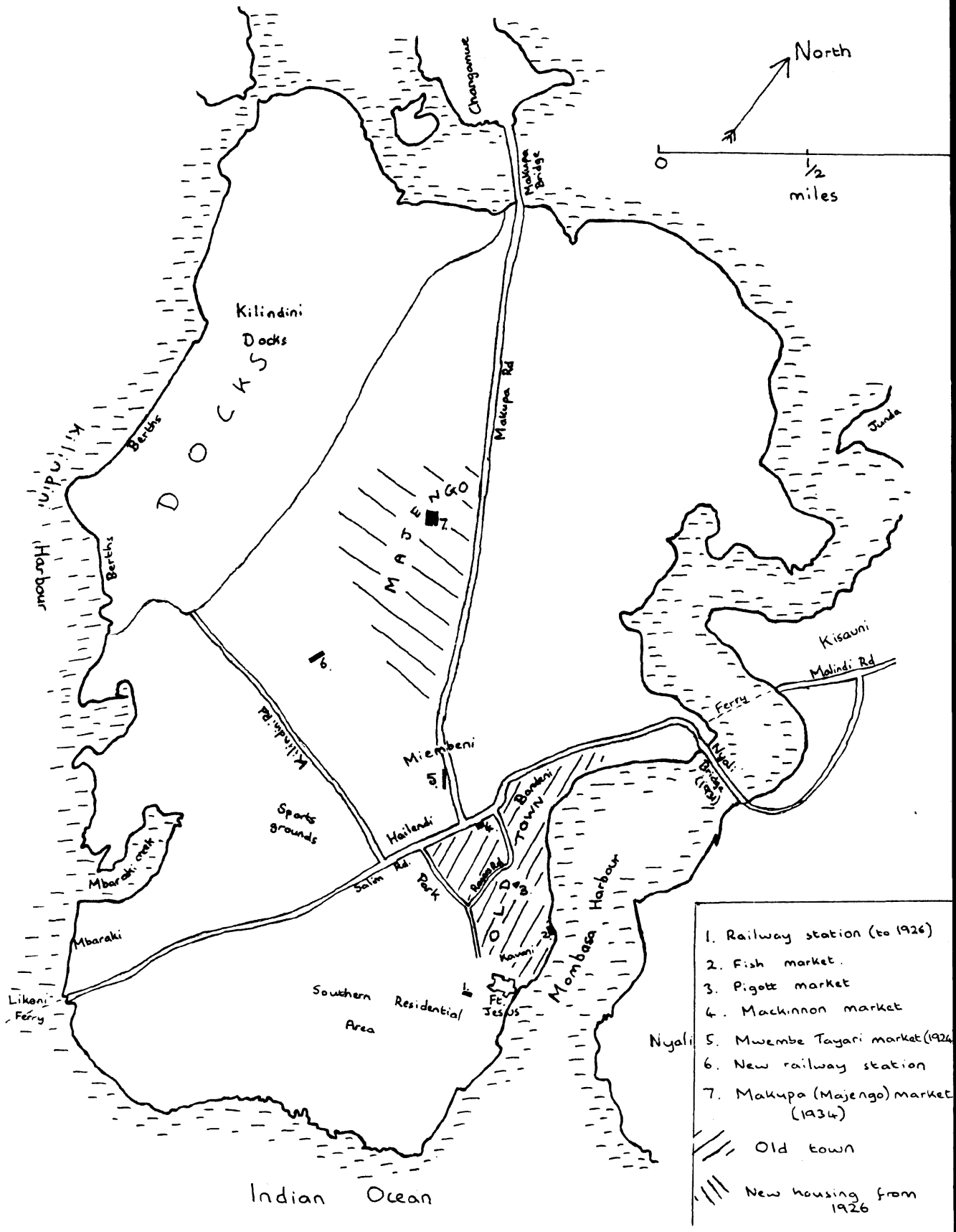
4. 'Housing the floating population'

Planning Mombasa, 1895-1931

In the years after 1912, while the boundaries and the commerce of Mombasa's local hinterland were being replanned by the administration, a similar process of planning was affecting the island of Mombasa. Colonial and metropolitan authorities often sought to remake urban physical space in order to change social relationships(1), and this happened in Mombasa, too. The use of space in commerce and for residence was dramatically affected, and in changing the use of space the administration did succeed to an extent in changing the social relationships which governed access to work and housing. Changing Mombasa was seen as another way in which to change the way people moved to Mombasa and found work. Like the replanning of the hinterland, the replanning of Mombasa was largely conceived as a policy in the aftermath of the 1912 Native Labour Commission, and the two policies were essentially similar: both were grounded in a discourse which emphasised the importance of maintaining ethnic boundaries on the coast, and preventing the further growth of the Swahili population.

Town planning was, however, a policy which finally came into effect rather later than did that of separating hinterland and mainland, and lasted for longer. In the 1920s the policy of separating the mainland areas of residence of the Mijikenda and of Swahili and Arabs had nearly collapsed: traders and planters were still being expelled from the reserves, but the administration's decision not to implement the 1918 or the 1925 Resident Natives Ordinance on the coast signalled the effective abandonment of attempts to exclude squatters from the

1. See for example G Stedman Jones, Outcast London..; F Cooper (ed), Struggle for the City...



Mombasa Island

coast(2).

In the town, however, this was the period in which major re-planning finally got away, after many delays. Unable to impose their will on the hinterland, the administration sought to control the town, at least.

* * *

Mombasa presented administrators with an unfamiliar problem. Unlike the other major towns of the East African Protectorate, it was an established settlement of considerable size before the British arrived, and much of the land on the island was already claimed as private property under a system of law which the administration were obliged to recognise. Hobley regretted that the IBEA Company had not bought more land on Mombasa island, rather than leaving it in private hands. If they had, as he said, 'that town might be a very different place today'(3). There was no opportunity here to start from scratch with a new town, built on the administration's terms. Cooper has remarked that the city in colonial Africa was generally a centre of power and residence for Europeans, 'a social bastion'(4), and that to control and order space in the city was important ideologically, as a demonstration of European dominance. Within this ideological framework, Mombasa's status as a 'native' town(5) presented particularly galling difficulties for administrators. Officials connected the problems of administering Mombasa with their lack of control over space in the city. Concerned as they were with regulation and good order, the

2. p.8, Kilifi District AR, 1924-25, KNA DC KFI 1/1
3. CW Hobley, Kenya: from chartered company to Crown colony, London, 1929, p.71.
4. F Cooper (ed) Struggle for the city, p.18.
5. KK Janmohamed, 'African labourers..', p.172.

physical complexity of the town of Mombasa presented something of an offence to officials, and their disapproval of the complexity of society within the town found expression through reference to the insanitary nature of the physical structures of this society.

So it was that Mombasa's markets were accused of harbouring plague, and the houses of being overcrowded and dangerous. The descriptions were often in themselves accurate - the markets were unsalubrious - but they were bound in to a particular discourse which saw dirt and disease as the natural corollary of the informal economy of the town. As such, they justified policies aimed not at improving life for the people of Mombasa, but rather at producing a more manageable town. Replanning space in Mombasa changed, and often diminished, the options open to the town's populace, and reduced their ability to control their own time.

The British interest in planning Mombasa began with the start of the Protectorate in 1895. The initial concern was not with residence but with the location, and by extension the control, of commerce. From 1895 until the 1920s, a debate continued about where the port of Mombasa should be, or rather over the extent to which the administration should enforce the transfer of the port from the harbour on the east of the island, known as Mombasa harbour, to that on the west known as Kilindini. The transfer has generally been presented as uncontroversial, a natural shift from a smaller to a larger anchorage(6), but the debate was long-lived and occasionally acrimonious. The natural advantages of Kilindini over Mombasa were not in themselves decisive: until the 1920s, both were lighterage ports, and there was sufficient depth of water in Mombasa

6. F Cooper, On the African waterfront.., p.27.

to take the steamers of the time, which did continue to use this harbour. Only three steamers at a time could anchor in Mombasa harbour, but this was not mentioned as a drawback until the increased traffic of the First World War put additional pressure on space(7).

The contest between the two harbours was rather concerned with the ownership of the land on the shore and with the control of stevedoring and shorehandling. At Mombasa, the harbour lay in front of the existing town, where most of the land was in the hands of Indian and Arab owners, space for godowns was limited and labour was organised through networks of patronage over which the shipping companies had little or no influence.

From the Company period, the administration and the shipping companies saw the future port as lying on the Kilindini side, and endeavoured to secure and control land there(8). The traffic continued to flow to Mombasa, however, and in 1905 the Crown Advocate wrote that

> ..it is impossible for the Customs Officials at Mombasa with the very limited space at their disposal to deal adequately with the large quantity of goods landed at Mombasa... some legislation is necessary in order that imported goods should be to some extent diverted from Mombasa to Kilindini where the customs-house and go-down accommodation is much larger(9)

No doubt the difficulties faced by the Customs made Mombasa all the more attractive to some traders. However,

7. Memorandum, Ainsworth, Military Commissioner for Labour, 18 July 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/42.
8. Pigott - IBEA Sec, 21 Jan 1893, IBEA 52(20).
9. Crown Advocate - Ag Commissioner, 24 Nov 1905, PRO CO 533 6

the major shipping companies, particularly the British India Steam Navigation Company (BISN), which had been intimately involved with the IBEA Company and the beginnings of British rule in East Africa(10), made it clear that they preferred Kilindini. Smith Mackenzie and Co, the Mombasa arm of the BISN, told His Majesty's Commissioner in 1906 that

> We should therefore again most respectfully urge that the question of making Kilindini the compulsory harbour for steamers should be faced without delay(11)

The BISN and their erstwhile rival, the Union Castle Line, had a particular interest in Kilindini. They had diversified into stevedoring work, and sought to guarantee the profitability of this enterprise and of their own investment in infrastructure at Kilindini by obliging all steamers to anchor there. Their demands for legislation went unanswered, but the administration sought to encourage the use of Kilindini with plans for a pier. The Mombasa Chamber of Commerce, at that time dominated by Indian interests(12), objected strongly to these attempts to force trade away from their base around Mombasa harbour.

> ..There is little or no accommodation for the merchant public to erect the warehouses and offices which it will be necessary for the said merchant public to erect should the Kilindini harbour become

10. J Forbes Munro 'Shipping subsidies and railway guarantees',JAH, XXVIII, 2, 1987, pp. 207-230
11. Smith Mackenzie and Co - HM Commissioner, 3 Jan 1906, PRO CO 533 11.
12. EAS (W), 6 Jan 1906.

the principal harbour of the Protectorate(13)

The local newspaper, owned by a European entrepreneur, argued that Mombasa needed a reliable water supply more than it did a new pier(14) - the first of several conflicts of interest between shipping companies and other European enterprises. The pier, when it was eventually built, proved to be something of a white elephant.

Attempts to enforce the move to Kilindini continued. In 1912, the six officials who comprised the Township Committee proposed to change the system of granting pratique (that is, a clean bill of health and permission to land) at Mombasa. They suggested that it only be granted at Kilindini, which would have forced all steamers wishing to discharge cargo at Mombasa to anchor first at Kilindini(15). There was a storm of protest from the Chamber of Commerce, which by this time was dominated by European trading companies, though still with some Indian membership(16). The plan was dropped, but the administration had other means of getting its way, notably by concentrating investment at Kilindini. When the Chamber of Comerce asked that new godowns be built at Mombasa and Kilindini, they were provided only at Kilindini(17). Plans to expand the goods yard at the railway station, which at that time stood near the Fort, were rejected by the Sites board (three of whose five members were also on the Township Committee), as 'any

13. Phirozsham Gimi, Ag Hon Sec, Msa Chamber of Commerce - HM Commissioner, 15 Oct 1906, in EAS (W), 20 Oct 1906.
14. Editorial, EAS (W), 11 Aug 1906.
15. Memo of minutes, Township Committee, 28 Aug 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/11/377.
16. Memo of minutes, Msa Township Cttee, 8 Oct 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/11/377.
17. EAS (W), 7 Sept 1912.

extension of Mombasa Railway Station at this juncture would be a retrograde step as the undoubted tendency was for development to take place at Kilindini'(18).

The First World War delayed further plans for transferring traffic, but the increased use of Mombasa harbour and the attendant labour troubles seems to have reinforced the enthusiasm of administrators for Kilindini(19). By 1927, the dominance of Kilindini over Mombasa, and of Union Castle and the BISN over Kilindini, was assured. In 1921, the shipping companies took over lighterage as well as stevedoring at Kilindini(20). From 1924 onwards the British governemnt financed the building of a number of deep-water berths at Kilindini, at a considerable cost to the colonial purse, ending the reliance on lighterage(21). In 1927 the cargo-handling company established by the BISN and Union Castle merged with its' only competitor(22) to form the Kenya Landing and Shipping Company. This consolidation of the shipping companies' position was associated with their accommodation with the system of patronage that centred on the figure of Salim bin Ali(23) - a patron whose influence was reliant at least partly on his recognition by the company. Having shifted the harbour of the island to Kilindini, away from the commercial networks of the old port, the administration and the shipping companies had also in part transformed the networks of labour.

18. Minutes of Mombasa Sites Board, 30 Dec 1914, KNA PC Coast 1/11/377.
19. See Chapter 3.
20. Report of the Port Commission of Enquiry, Dec 1925, KNA AG/4/2941.
21. For the continuing expense of this, see eg Kenya Colonial report for 1927, HMSO 1929, p.40.
22. 'Agreement for Handling Cargo at Mombasa', 13 April 1927, KNA AG/4/2937.
23. See Int 71b .

The association between the location of commerce and its' control, was also evident in the planning of Mombasa's markets. Concern over the nature and location of the markets of the town was expressed early in the century, preceding the debate about the nature and location of residence on the island. From 1895, the main vegetable and meat market of Mombasa was at Pigott Place(24), a cramped area in the western section of the town, near the Mombasa harbour. Almost as soon as this market was built, concerns were expressed by officials about its location, through suggestions that the market was insanitary and a possible breeding ground for disease(25). By 1912, another market, the Mackinnon Market, was operating on Salim Road, the main road dividing the older parts of the town from the new sections developing to the north, and official efforts were consistently directed towards closing down the Pigott Market and moving the stallholders from there to Mackinnon. The relocation of these markets was explained in terms of the dirt and disease which characterised the Pigott Market and the need to provide more sanitary facilities, but its main effect was to render the markets of Mombasa increasingly exclusive, by pushing out casual marketeers and hawkers.

Pigott Market, while it held forty stalls leased out on a monthly rental, was also used by a large number of casual, squatter sellers who operated from around the edge of these stalls. In 1918, just before the market was finally closed, it was noted that there were seventy such

24. Collector, Msa - Ag Sub-Commr, 9 Aug 1906, KNA PC Coast 1/1/113
25. See above; also MOH - Sub-Commr, 19 June 1905, KNA PC Coast 1/1/99.

sellers each day(26) - and since they were casual marketeers who paid a fee each day on the produce they sold, rather than a rent for space, there were presumably considerably more than seventy individuals involved at different times. Some of these occasional marketeers were themselves producers, women and men, from the island or the immediately adjacent mainland; ex-slaves and converts from Kisauni, Likoni and Changamwe who came to the market to sell their own produce, relying on no intermediaries(27). For the population of Changamwe and Miritini, the institution of the local train service to Mombasa in 1905 made such trips easier(28). Others of these casual marketeers were townspeople selling the produce of friends or clients, acting as low-level tajiris. In the move to the new markets - first to Mackinnon, then to Mwembe Tayari and Makupa (Majengo) - it was these squatter sellers who suffered.

Mackinnon and the other markets were intended to offer concrete stall accommodation to all sellers, on a monthly basis, replacing both the occasional squatting seller and the lower-budget stalls many had created:

> [Mackinnon market] is being fitted with concrete stalls which when erected will allow for the abolition of the Makuti [palm-thatch] booths which at present surround the market(29)

26. Supt Conservancy - PC, 25 Oct 1918, KNA PC Coast 1/14/97.

27. See the letter of Salama bti Amani in EAS (W) 8 Sept 1906.
28. ibid.
29. p.10, Mombasa District AR, April-December 1921, KNA DC MSA 1/3.

It was partly the difficulties in financing the building of these facilities which delayed for so long the closure of Pigott Market, which occurred some thirteen years after it was originally proposed. Such long-term accommodation was eminently unsuited to the squatters. It was made even more so by the PC's decision that the new market should recoup the cost of its construction through market fees(30). The PC also expressed his opinion that the fees at Pigott had been set too low(31). The charges at Mackinnon were so high that even the regular stallholders from Pigott Market were reluctant to make the move(32).

Resistance from the vendors delayed the move from Pigott Market even more than did building problems. In 1916, the Conservancy Department suggested that the transfer was proceeding well(33), but this was clearly not the case. Though the fees at Pigott were low, the takings from that market in 1915-16 were Rs 8,482/19, while the takings at Mackinnon were only Rs 2,155/43(34). Sanderson, the Superintendent of the Conservancy, noted more realistically in 1917 that vendors and purchasers much preferred the Pigott Market(35) - which was, after all, cheaper for both, however unpleasing it was to the colonial eye. The provision of the improved facilities at Mackinnon was not in itself sufficient to make the vendors move. Sanderson put up some resistance both to the scale

30. PC - Supt of Conservancy, 10 Aug 1916, KNA PC Coast 1/12/76.
31. PC - Supt of Conservancy, 14 April 1916, KNA PC Coast 1/12/76.
32. Supt Conservancy - PC, 1 Feb 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/12/76.
33. Supt Conservancy - PC, 18 April 1916, KNA PC Coast 1/12/76
34. ibid.
35. Supt Conservancy - PC, 1 Feb 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/12/76.

of fees in the new market and to Hobley's suggestion for the auctioning of stalls - arguing that either proposal would tend to put all the stalls into the hands of a few Indian merchants(36). This resistance was not continued by Vidal, the Acting Superintendent of the Conservancy who took over in 1917, and who with Hobley pressed enthusiastically ahead with the transfer.

> I am of the opinion that it would be most beneficial to remove the stall-holders from the Pigott Market to the Mackinnon Market as not only is the Pigott Market at present most congested, but also the site of it is most unsatisfactory, as being in a most crowded and insanitary part of the Township(37)

The PC responded to this by asking the Public Works Department to build temporary stalls at the Mackinnon Market 'as it is advisable for reasons of public health to abolish the Pigott Market as soon as possible'(38). Pigott Market was finally closed in 1919.

In the same year the cost of selling from the Mackinnon Market was increased even further, when following warnings from the Health Department that the rats who lived around the market could cause an outbreak of bubonic plague (a spectre that was to be raised more than once in the planning of Mombasa), stall-holders were obliged to remove their produce from the market at the end of each day and store it elsewhere, a regulation which increased enormously the costs of running a stall(39). The

36. Supt conservancy - PC, 18 April 1916, KNA PC Coast 1/12/76
37. Ag Supt Conservancy - PC, 26 April 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/12/76.
38. PC - DPW, 27 April 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/12/76.
39. PC - Supt Conservancy, 7 Jan 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/12/76

Medical Officer of Health warned that

> ..if goods were to be left overnight we would within a few weeks have the disgusting conditions of the Old Pigott market in being once again(40)

This came in the wake of efforts to force all trade in produce into the market - the administration having noted with alarm that there was a considerable trade in fruit from private houses and small shops around the town, a trade that threatened to leave the market empty, and against which officials were unsure of their legal powers(41). Township Rule 127 forbade the sale of fresh meat, fish, poultry or vegetables outside of a public market, but did not apparently include fruit(42). The plan to restrict fruit-selling, however, was delayed until 1924, when the new market at Mwembe Tayari opened - for before this time there had been insufficient room in the public markets for fruit-vendors(43).

In combination, the effect of these measures was to close off a number of opportunities, to interfere in the relationships from which the networks of the town were built and so to disrupt these networks. It became increasingly difficult to earn a living as an occasional seller of one's own or others produce, and to work this activity into a life in the town outside the constraints of contracts and regular work. The population of Mombasa responded by evading the market laws, and built new alternatives. 'Private' markets grew up, and the public markets had difficulty renting out all their

40. Ag MOH - PC, 9 Jan 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/14/9741. 41. Ag Supt Conservancy - PC, 26 April 1917; also PC - Supt Conservancy, 7 Jan 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/12/76.
42. ibid.
43. p.9, Msa District AR, 1924, KNA DC MSA 1/3

stalls(44). These private markets, collections of insubstantial stalls on the land of private landowners, thrived despite their illegality: Township Rule 127 evidently was not being enforced. In 1933 the new Municipal Board of Mombasa, moved to close down the private markets which 'befouled the town and competed severely with petty-shopkeepers'(45). The Board, chaired by the DC, decided not to ban the markets (which were theoretically illegal anyway), but to pursue the subtler tactic of making them legal. In legalising them, they 'should be charged so high a fee as to make them, in their present form, unprofitable'(46). A £100 'licence' fee was imposed on the landowners involved(47).

The tajiri system continued, but inevitably the capital required to be a tajiri had increased and the relationship became increasingly financial, and the possibilities for incorporation and adoption increasingly limited. A Jibana informant described the relationship between a Jibana fruit-seller and his tajiri in about 1920 as virtually a family one, through which the Jibana man eventually moved to Mombasa as a Muslim:

> He was his friend. It was like, the tajiris come, you choose the one who is your friend. Even if someone else comes, you tell him, I'm not selling, I'm waiting for my friend. So, he was his friend. Well, he converted him, and then he lived with him...on Sundays the old man [tajiri] would come,

44. Minutes, Msa Municipality Finance Cttee, 28 Feb 1933; and Msa Municipality Health Cttee, 3 March 1933.
45. Minutes, Mombasa Municipality Health Cttee, 17 Jan 1933.
46. Minutes, Msa Municipality Health Cttee, 3 March 1933.
47. Minutes, Msa Municipal Board, 8 August 1933.

> he came to see him, and he called him his child(48)

By contrast, a Duruma chicken-seller in the 1930s, who never moved beyond the stage of going to Mombasa for a swift visit to sell his goods, had a relationship with his tajiri which, while it still excluded other buyers, was never expressed in terms of family,

> These Shihiri, I don't know them, I don't know his name, no. When I arrived I was given my money and went home....I sold to him, never another, just him. He would get used to you, who you are, so that if you come with your goods, you don't sell to anybody else..he knew that 'this is my man, when his produce comes, he doesn't sell it to anyone else, he sells it to me'. So you go to his house, he welcomes you, you drink tea, and finish, then you count your produce, it's alright, it's alright, he pays you. You go home(49)

The transformation was not immediate or complete. The private markets survived as outlets for the less capitalised trader, and the market for some items was not so radically transformed by official replanning. The fish market was not moved in this period, and incorporative networks, drawing Mijikenda into town life, continued around this market into the 1930s. A Digo from Jumba, near Mtwapa, who as a youth had taken his father's catch to Mombasa to sell to a contact in the fish market, went later to Mombasa to work as a fisherman and live as the 'son' of this contact(50).

48. Int 21b, p.6.
49. Int 66a, pp.4-5.
50. Int 55a.

The administration's concern with public health led to the transformation of other kinds of labour in the town. The supply of water in Mombasa had always been a problem - in 1895, the town was supplied only from wells on the island itself, which were often brackish and always liable to contamination(51). The laying of pipes from the Shimba Hills to Mombasa in 1912, a scheme beset by engineering problems and a horrific death rate amongst the labourers(52), eased the problem for a while, but the rapid growth of the town in the 1920s led to more ambitious plans to bring water from Mzizima, 140 miles inland(53). The introduction of piped water considerably affected the informal economy of water-carriers. There were one hundred and forty wells in Mombasa in 1913, and while many of these had recognised owners, who had paid for them to be dug(54), the water from them was free: the building of a well was an Islamic good work for the community, zakat(55), not a money-making enterprise. The provision of piped water was a public work by the administration, and an expensive one at that, and some of the cost was to be recouped through charging users. In 1911 for example, the Governor looked forward to raising £6-7,000 a year from water rates to repay the £90,000 being spent on the Shimba project(56) As time went on, water-carriers were increasingly faced with having to pay for the water which they, in turn, hawked around Mombasa(57) - a small charge, but one which tended to restrict the ease with which townspeople could use water-hawking as an occasional source of income.

51. EAS, (W) 1 Dec 1906; Report of Medical Dept for 1904, 22 June 1905, PRO CO 533 2 .
52. Simpson - Governor, 1 Jan 1914, KNA MOH 1/1186
53. Governor - SoS, 23 March 1930, CO 533 399/1
54. See the list in KNA DC MSA 8/1
55. Int 54a
56. EAS (W), 5 Aug 1911
57. Int 43b, 49a

It was, however, in replanning the residence of Mombasa's population that officials were to have their greatest impact on the society of the town, although the plans were never completed and their eventual effect was far from that intended.

The first 'town plan' for Mombasa dates from 1907, when the debates over the harbour and the markets were already in progress. This partial plan, drawn up by the Collector and the Director of Public Works(58), led to calls for a more complete plan, and suggestions for the form it might take, by the Commissioner of Lands(59). Both plans favoured the division of the island into areas, and the separation of African from European housing. The problems of any such scheme - most notably that buying the land involved would be prohibitively expensive - meant that the idea lay idle for another four years.

In 1912, a serious outbreak of pneumonic plague in Mombasa killed a number of Africans(60) and inspired several draconian proposals from Hobley and other officials which revealed the extent of their frustration at the unmanageability of Mombasa, and their association of this uncontrollability with disease and contamination. Hobley suggested that a line of soldiers be drawn up across the island, separating the largely African and Asian north and east of the island from the mainly white enclave to the south. The island would be sealed off from the mainland and 'those Asiatics and Africans who wish to leave the island will have to remain 7 days under

58. 'Report of town extension plan for section of Mombasa Island', MacGregor Ross, Sept 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/14/98.
59. Memo, Cmmr of Lands, 17 May 1909, KNA PC Coast 1/14/98.
60. 'Daily Bulletin', MOH, 15 Nov 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/15/90.

observance in an isolation camp'(61). In order to feed this isolated island

> [markets] will be so arranged so that sellers from the mainland will be able to cross the various ferries, enter barbed wire bomas and sell their produce over the fence to natives of the island standing outside the same..(62)

It was an extravagant fantasy, which the administration had no resources to support, and which came to nothing. Yet in identifying the population of the island as a source of contamination and disease, controllable only by the most extreme measures, it reveals something of the preoccupations of the coastal administration in 1912 - the year of the Native Labour Commission as well as of the pneumonic plague.

1913 was something of a year for new policy initiatives, and it was in that year that Professor Simpson was despatched to East Africa by the Colonial Office. Combining the role of health expert and town planner Simpson epitomised the approach to planning that has been called 'the sanitation syndrome', in reference to the planning of Cape Town (63). He was a founder of the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, had worked in urban planning in Cape Town and was held in considerable awe by the Colonial Office(64). He produced a long and detailed report which comprehensively damned Mombasa as a health

61. PC - Chief Sec.,12 Oct 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/15/90.
62. ibid.
63. M Swanson, 'The Sanitation Syndrome', in JAH XVIII, 3, 1977, pp.387-419. (bubonic plague and urban native policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-09)
64. RW Baldock, 'Colonial governors and the colonial state: a study of British policy in tropical Africa, 1918-25', PhD thesis, Bristol, 1978, pp.326-7.

risk:

> The condition of the greater part of the native town is so radically bad that ordinary measures to improve its sanitary state will not be effective(65)

Simpson produced a scheme of what he thought the extraordinary measures should be. Like the planners of 1907, he proposed the division of the town into different areas for African and European housing, the two to be separated by a string of parks and public spaces to prevent the spread of contagion: trees would take the place of Hobley's soldiers(66). Unlike them, and unlike the planners of Durban, he sought to introduce another division.

Simpson, unusually for a European observer in this period, had some praise for the Swahili in his report on Mombasa. He described the new part of Mombasa, to the west of the two older parts, in favourable terms:

> The western portion of the town consists principally of makuti huts inhabited chiefly by Swahilis and by Africans from the interior who have been Islamised and who have adopted the Swahili mode of life...on the whole they and their surroundings are kept in a comparatively clean condition(67)

Such praise was deceptive. His argument was, in one sense, an inversion of the discourse that characterised the Swahili as immoral and lazy and raised the spectre of the

65. p.9, Simpson, 'Report on Mombasa's sanitation', 13 Sept 1913, KNA MOH 1/1231.
66. ibid, p.16.
67. pp. 5-6, 'Report on the sanitation of Mombasa', KNA MOH 1/1231.

people of Mombasa corrupting their neighbours on the hinterland. Simpson's view changed the nature of the contamination involved from a spreading of laziness to a spreading of disease - and the direction of contamination was reversed. Yet in practice, Simpson's ideas fitted in well with the policy of separating the people of Mombasa from the people of the hinterland, and Hobley expressed considerable enthusiasm for them(68). Just as the idea that the Swahili would contaminate the hinterland with their laziness underlay the policy of removing the Mijikenda areas from coastal influence, so the idea that Swahili were peculiarly and uniquely suited to urban life underlay attempts to separate Swahili from other Africans in the town:

> The Swahili or coast people are cleanly in their habits, and it is of the highest importance that they should retain that virtue which is very difficult to practice when their dwellings are intermingled with lodging houses for primitive Africans who, cleanly in their villages, are unable to adapt themselves to the conditions of town life(69)

Simpson proposed that land be set aside for the construction of a 'model town for the more permanent Swahili and African population' who would thus be separated from the dangers to public health involved in living among those whom he chose to regard as temporary residents. For these temporary residents was needed

> ..a site for a native location where the labourers

68. PC - Chief Sec, 16 Sept 1913, KNA MOH 1/1231
69. pp.16-17, Simpson, 'Report on the sanitation of Mombasa', KNA MOH 1/1231.

> who are mostly engaged at the Kilindini Harbour can reside under healthy conditions and where the larger part of the floating population will find suitable accommodation(70).

This view of the Swahili as a population somehow separate from the 'floating' population of dockworkers was fantasy, an expression of what administrators would have liked rather than what was. Other sources make it very clear that the casual labour market was actually a very Swahili institution in 1913, and Simpson's proposals were an attempt to impose a division, rather than an attempt to cope with the consequences of an existing division: Mombasa's labour force would be made more tractable by turning its members into purely temporary migrants to the town. The plan to 'reduce the overcrowding in the Old Town'(71) by moving people away from there and dividing them between the model town and the location would create this division. The suggestion that Africans in controlled housing were healthier is, incidentally, somewhat questionable: Simpson never mentioned that the 1912 plague actually began among some of the few workers in Mombasa who were housed by their employers, those of the Public Works Department(72).

Simpson's proposals were very similar to those which Wilson, the Director of Government Transport, had put forward in 1907. Infuriated by the control which Swahili 'headmen' had over the workforce of Mombasa, he had suggested that Africans coming to Mombasa in search of employment be housed in 'a separate settlement, on the outskirts of the town, or a large shed housed to erect

70. ibid, p.11
71. ibid, p.13
72. Confidential, MOH, 9 Sept 1912, KNA PC Coast 1/15/90.

them'(73). Apparently ignored in 1907 when advanced as a labour control measure, the idea of a separate location met with more enthusiasm in 1913 when recast in the idiom of public health. The idea of separation was essentially similar to that being pursued by officials in the local hinterland: some Africans belonged in the town, and were a distinct and separate group marked off by their Muslim religion as well as their urban residence, while all other Africans were unfitted for long-term life in the town, and threatened the public health by their presence in any but the most carefully controlled urban setting. On the other hand they themselves needed to be protected from the corrupting influence of urban Africans, who may have been clean but who were seen as idle and dishonest.

Simpson planned not only for the establishment of these government model housing schemes. Private landowners would be set an example by these schemes, and would develop their own land similarly. To encourage this, Simpson proposed new planning controls to prevent further building in what was called the Old Town, the eastern and northern areas of Mombasa where Swahili and Arab families had been constantly extending, modifying and developing their properties to provide accommodation for their natural and adopted kin. Buildings were not to cover more than one half of the plot on which they stood, and a minimum plot size was to be established(74). Expressed as measures to improve sanitation, these acted to limit the incorporative powers of families living in the Old Town.

The intent of these policies was markedly different to that which Cooper has identified in policies of the

73. Director of Transport - SNA, 16 Aug 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/12/41.
74. p.19, Simpson, 'Report on the sanitation of Mombasa', 13 Sept 1913, KNA MOH 1/1231.

the late 1930s and 1940s in Mombasa(75). Much influenced by Stedman Jones' writing on the replanning of space and time in 19th-century London(76), Cooper argues that by the end of the 1930s the concern of the administration had begun to shift to the development of a stable and regular working class in Mombasa. As part of this task, they were increasingly interested in removing the threat to order and regularity posed by the 'residuum' of casual labourers, whose contacts with the local hinterland allowed them to resist attempts to impose stricter work discipline upon them; they sought to regularise casual labour as part of a general plan to produce a workforce imbued with the right attitude to work.

In arguing this, Cooper seems to assume a link between casuality and migrancy, suggesting that the locus of casual workers' reproduction was not in Mombasa, but in the hinterland(77) - so that in limiting casual labour, the state was limiting the migrant part of the workforce.

In 1913 the perceived problem was rather the reverse. Casual labourers on the docks and elsewhere in Mombasa often had migrated to Mombasa, but they were not migrants in the sense that they retained regular contact with and continued to be reproduced by the hinterland economy. This was exactly the problem faced by the administration. All the measures intended to produce a controllable supply of labour from the local hinterland - taxation, contracts with the force of criminal law, the power given to headmen - were unsuccessful. Attempts to discipline and control Africans through the identity and

75. F Cooper, On the African waterfront.., Introduction.
76. G Stedman Jones, Outcast London..
77. see Cooper, On the African waterfront...; also F Cooper (ed) Struggle for the city.., p.35.

obligations placed on them by their membership of the homestead were evaded by the Mijikenda. Instead they found new identities and obligations within Mombasa where the very fluidity of ethnicity and identity put them beyond the practicable reach of taxman or policeman. In calling Mombasa a 'native' town, administrators were recognising this - that one of the urban areas which they sought to control, that is the physical expression of the civilisation they claimed to bring, was in fact beyond their control, and could serve as a refuge from the power of the state in the rural areas. Officials sought to separate casuals from these networks of the town, to ensure that they were a floating population; for the permanently urban population of Mombasa, whose locus of reproduction was in the town, was an undesirable and inconvenient phenomenon, whose work habits were antithetical to the colonial vision. Employers and officials still preferred migrant labour: the realisation that 'cheap labour was expensive'(78), and attempts by the state to make employers accept this realisation, were yet to come.

Cooper's comments that the casual workers of Mombasa had a particular strength through their access to rural areas, and so to an independent food supply, are however partially true of this period. The rural area involved was not the Mijikenda ridge, but Mombasa's own very local semi-urban periphery, at Changamwe, Kisauni and Likoni, and even land on the island: Mombasa was still not, even in the 1920s, an entirely urban space. All this land was farmed and occupied through ties of kin and patronage that led back to Mombasa, not to homesteads in Rabai or Jibana. Migrants could be Swahili, and 'townspeople', and still

78. F Cooper(ed), Struggle for the city.. ,p.22.

have some limited access to land.

So Simpson's plan fitted well with existing preoccupations in 1913, and Hobley, the PC, seized on the suggestions with enthusiasm, writing his own appendix to the report in which he recommended that private landowners with land on which housing schemes were not set up should be taxed(79). He also began acquiring the land on which the locations and the 'model town' were to be built, buying and leasing more than one hundred acres of island land from Ali bin Salim and another Arab landowner(80). Ali bin Salim was later to claim that he had sold the land especially cheaply, in a phrase that encapsulates the association of uncontrolled casual labour with disease:

> Government wanted the land for the location of natives who go and work on the steamers to avoid carrying plague. It was for this reason we gave the land for much less than what the land was worth(81)

Ali bin Salim made this claim as part of a demand for compensation some eighteen years later - for the land had not in fact been used for the building of a location. Though Hobley had started buying land, finance was not available for the actual development of the land; for laying the new roads which were to divide up the planned settlement, and most of all for compensating house- and land-owners who were to be displaced by this - for the

79. pp.5-6, Hobley, Appendix 2 to 'Report on the sanitation of Mombasa', KNA MOH 1/1231.
80. Crown Counsel - Cmmr for Local Govt, Lands and Settlement, 25 June 1931, KNA AG/4/1736.
81. Ali bin Salim - Commr for Local Govt, Lands and Settlement, 4 March 1931, KNA AG/4/1736.

bulk of land on Mombasa island was privately owned(82). Hobley estimated that the scheme would cost well over £70,000(83). It was not possible to raise this money through local taxation, or even to impose the proposed punitive tax on uncooperative land-owners, for under the various international treaties which had established British rule on the coast, such particular local taxation was impossible(84). Mombasa's unusual legal status meant that the town remained for the time being unplannable, and Simpson's plan was reverentially referred to but unused for some years thereafter(85).

The First World War made the scheme even more impracticable, as officials turned their attention to controlling the interment rather than the residence of Africans: Mombasa was the site of a Carrier Corps hospital, and the appalling maltreatment of conscripted Africans dramatically increased the demands for burial space. In 1917, one hundred conscripts a month were dying in Mombasa, and the government was forced to buy more land on the island for a new cemetery(86). There were neither funds nor the willpower to pursue town planning ideas.

Housing in Mombasa continued to develop beyond the control of government, reliant instead on personal contact, kinship and friendship. Officials criticism of the condition of the town continued to locate the problem in the Old Town and the mixing there of different communities. While some of the newer areas of housing were

82. see 'Memo on the formation of the Land Titles Board', Hamilton, 27 Jan 1906, PRO CO 533 18; also Janmohamed, 'A History of Mombasa..', p.215.
83. PC - Chief Sec, 16 Sept 1913, KNA MOH 1/1231.
84. Hobley, Kenya: From chartered company to Crown colony, pp.150-151.
85. PC - Land Officer, 10 Feb 1915, KNA MOH 1/3876.
86. PC - Principal Sanitation Officer, 31 Oct 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/12/285.

judged acceptable in 1919

> The housing of the Swahili in the older portions of the town, i.e. such parts as lie between the Salim Road and Mombasa harbour is, however, extremely bad. The ground is uneven and difficult to keep clean..It may be of course that the best Swahili have migrated to the areas first mentioned and only the poorer and lower-class natives and communities such as the Washihiri to whom dirt does not seem to be repugnant have remained(87).

Housing and town planning were now becoming involved in a new refinement of the debate over ethnicity. It was an argument similar to Simpson's, but drawing in an idea that was to have some importance in the 1920s - that the Swahili could actually be separated into higher and lower-class groups(88), that only some were genuine Swahili with a right to stay in the town, and that dirt, disease and overcrowding were associated with those who had recently become Swahili. Officials still wanted the population separated, and justified this desire with talk of sanitation. Noting that workers in Mombasa lived in the 'native villages' rather than in compounds, a Labour Inspection Officer remarked in 1919 that 'This naturally constitutes a very serious position here and with its consequent overcrowding leaves much to be desired with reference to sanitation and accommodation'(89). The reference to 'native villages' is itself revealing; it was a term that continued in use for some years(90), and lends

87. p.2, Msa District Native AR, 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/12/279.
88. See Chapter 5.
89. Labour Inspection Officer - CNC, 17 July 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/9/53.
90. See the 'Native Village Housing Schemes' in the 'Mombasa Town Plan', KNA AG/4/1384.

support to Cooper's ideas about the ideological importance of controlling urban space: Africans in Mombasa, even Swahili, lived in villages.

At the beginning of the 1920s, kin and adoption were still important in finding housing in Mombasa. This was true not only of the Arabs or Swahili in the Old Town who housed and fed clients, effectively as new additions to their family, as a part of their relationship. In the growing western part of the town, many of the householders did not own the land on which their houses stood, but rented it from Arab or Indian land-owners. In the first quarter of the century, this part of the town grew larger and larger, housing the bulk of the new additions to the population of Mombasa.

Many of the householders in this area were fairly recent arrivals in the town, as Simpson noted(91): ex-slaves, Mijikenda or other immigrants - 'first-generation' Swahili, they might be called. To these householders came kin from the hinterland, reliant on their town contacts for housing and an introduction to a job. The nature of the kin relationship was sometimes vague but was expressed through the term ndugu. Few paid rent for a room, or to share a room, though some did occasional domestic work and were charged no rent(92):'there at my ndugu's I paid no rent, he took me because I was an ndugu'(93). Thus the migrant became a junior member of the household, with an obligation to work and a right to be housed, rather than a tenant working in lieu of rent. The migrants slept in storerooms, on the verandah, or even in the ceiling space of the house(94). Again, Mijikenda had easier access to

91. See note 66, above
92. Int 61a.
93. Int 43a, p.4.
94. Int 56a, 61a, 43a.

such arrangements than did other Africans.

The householders paid rent to the land-owner for the plot on which their house stood, but had no security of tenure(95): they could be expelled at any time, but rarely were, for the money from these tenants was the only income the land-owners earned(96). Hobley noted in 1913 that the process of renting land was in transition. At this time, prospective house-builders would pay a land-owner a lump sum of between two and five rupees for permission to build. They were also expected to pay a monthly rental of between one half and one rupee(97). The rental charge was steadily increasing(98) and with this the paying of the lump sum was going into decline(99): land-owners were increasingly looking for a regular income rather than a one-off payment in recognition of their claims over the land and its occupier. This in turn tended to mean that there was no special relationship between the land-owner and the houseowner. The transformation was not immediate: numbers of Ali bin Salim's ex-slaves still lived on his land in 1920(100). Ten years later they were gone. Networks created through ties of family, natural or adoptive, came to be important for newcomers seeking housing from house-owners, not for townspeople seeking land to build on.

Until the mid-1920s little was done to control housing, though the intention to implement the Simpson plan, or

95. See the conditions in e.g. Entry 566A of 1904, Register A17, which are fairly standard
96. pp.5-6, Hobley, Appendix 2 to 'Report on the sanitation of Mombasa', KNA MOH 1/1231.
97. p.5, ibid.
98. p.13, Simpson, 'Report on the sanitation..', KNA MOH 1/1231
99. p.5, Hobley, Appendix 2 to 'Report on..', KNA MOH 1/1231.
100. Int 67a.

some version thereof, was never lost. In the meantime, Mombasa's population flouted the building regulations as determinedly as they broke the labour and tax laws. In 1913, the same year that Simpson wrote his report, the Chief Sanitation Officer complained that 'unauthorised ones [buildings] are springing up in full time places'(101). In 1915 the PC complained that

> I note that a number of small Swahili houses are being erected on the S. side of Makupa Road to the west of the Parsee Cemetery. These appear to be laid out without any due regard to a building line or with adequate space left between the buildings(102).

His demands for action from the Conservancy Department went unanswered. In 1921, the DC was still looking forward to town planning, but aware of the ineffectiveness of previous efforts:

> No improvement can be expected in the Township until the Town Planning Authority can commence operations and the open parts of the island become available for habitation. Even this presents difficulties as the land is nearly all in private ownership(103).

Finally, in 1926, long after a special enabling ordinance had been enacted in 1919, and after much consulatation with landowners over the nature and amount of compensation, a new town plan was published(104) and attempts began to put it into effect.

101. Chief Sanitation Officer - PC, 30 July 1913, KNA PC Coast 1/11/104.
102. PC - Supt Conservancy, 10 Sept 1915, KNA PC Coast 1/14/134
103. p.3, Msa District AR, 1920-21, KNA PC Coast 1/1/412.
104. Mombasa Town Planning Scheme, Nairobi,1926, KNA AG/4/1348

Though Baldock has suggested that Simpson's influence, and official enthusiasm for segregation, declined after 1921(105), there is little evidence for this decline in the 1926 scheme. It set aside a commercial area, banned trade from some residential areas, and proposed the driving of roads through some of the most densely populated areas. The number of buildings per acre was limited to twenty, and buildings were restricted to covering one half of the surface area of any plot. The 'Southern Residential Area', south of the Fort was set aside for exclusively European settlement. Most importantly, the scheme retained Simpson's proposal for the differentiation of the labour force: one area was set aside for a 'Model Swahili Dwelling House Scheme' and another for the 'accommodation of African casual labourers'(106). Private enterprise housing schemes were encouraged by a tax on undeveloped land - possible now since the First World War had largely relieved the administration of its treaty obligations.

The separation of the labour force was provided for on this scheme, but this was no longer couched in terms of the suitability of Swahili and others to urban life, as it had been in 1913. Contamination was still the idiom, but one of morals rather than health. Ainsworth-Dickson, the Resident Commissioner, wrote of Swahili and Arab youth in 1925 that:

> All parental control has disappeared and there is no respect for authority..[they are] a generation of drunken, dangerous wasters, loafing through the days, contaminating every tribe in the country through

105. Baldock, 'Colonial governors..', pp.338-9.
106. Draft Order, 20 March 1926, in Mombasa Town Plan

personal example before those of its members temporarily residing in Mombasa(107)

For Africans, the implementation of the Scheme did not, in the event, mean the provision of government housing. The part of the Scheme that had most impact on Africans (and the poorer Arabs in Mombasa) was that concerning the widening of roads and the clearance of land to allow the construction of public buildings. 'A road line has been broken through from Mackinnon Market to Rogers' Road' noted the 1926 Mombasa Annual Report(108). Over the next five years, there were numerous evictions and clearances.

The agreement of land-owners to the 1926 plan had been won by guarantees that land-owners would be compensated and the establishment of a board to hear all claims for compensation. The negotiations leading up to this agreement opened up a revealing division among Mombasa's land-owners. Opposition to the possibility of forced land acquisition was initially general, but the government had turned to Ali bin Salim el-Busaidi to work out the details of the compensation and to persuade the landowners to accept the plans(109). The proposals for compensation offered money to land-owners but not to householders whose properties stood on the land of others - who would be those who actually faced eviction to make way for the road schemes. Ali bin Salim was largely successful in winning acquiescence, but there were problems. Small land-owners, more likely to own the house or houses which stood on their land as well as the land itself, continued in their

107. p.6, Msa District AR, 1925, KNA DC MSA 1/3
108. p.4, Msa District AR, 1926, KNA DC MSA 1/3; also R Stren, 'A survey of lower income areas in Mombasa', in J Hutton(ed) Urban challenge in East Africa, Nairobi, 1970, pp. 97-115.
109. p.3, Msa District AR, 1924, KNA DC MSA 1/3.

opposition to the sweeping powers for the acquisition of land and the demolition of buildings necessary to the Town Plan. Like householders with no land, they correctly foresaw that they would receive no adequate compensation for the destruction of their houses, and that the cost of rebuilding would force 'recourse to money-lenders with payment of ruinous interest and loss of our land'. Stating their opposition, these small land-owners described themselves as the 'Arab, Baluchi and Swahili landowners'(110). By contrast, larger land-owners, whose land was generally occupied by others, to whom their ties were purely financial, accepted the proposals for compensation more readily.

A small number of exclusively Arab and Swahili landlords were in the end the only land-owners with land of more than one acre in extent who maintained their opposition to the plans(111). At least two of this small group of men and women are still known for having been involved as the patrons and providers of land to Mijikenda and other migrants(112) - migrants who, under the town plan, faced eviction and the uncompensated destruction of their house. Ali bin Salim himself had played a similar role, but unlike the others he had made his own and highly successful accommodation with the colonial state. He and other land-owners showed much less enthusiasm for defending their tenants. After winning a court battle over the issue, the Town Planning Authority continued in their refusal to recognise an obligation to compensate householders(113). When they offered ex gratia payments to some householders, of up to 50% of the value of their

110. Objection 3, 25 Oct 1924; and Objection 2, 15 March 1924, KNA AG/4/1348.
111. Ali bin Salim - Res Comm, Msa, in Mombasa Town Planning Scheme, KNA AG/4/1348.
112. Int 72a and 26b.
113. p.3, Msa District AR, 1930, KNA DC MSA 1/3.

dwellings(114), there were accusations that land-owners were evicting householders before the Authority took over the land; the householders had no security of tenure and the land-owner might expect better compensation in return for expelling tenants. Ali bin Salim was himself accused of this practice in 1931(115).

The bulk of the clearances for the town plan took place along the western side of Salim Road, in the Hailendi and Mwembe Tayari areas and in the 'Old Town' in Kibokoni and in Bondeni(116). It was in Hailendi and Mwembe Tayari that many Mijikenda migrants in the colonial period had first found refuge, and Bondeni was the area of Mombasa that the Ribe and Kauma claimed, and still do claim as their own, and where many of them found relatives with whom to stay(117).

> It began in Hailendi. Number one, Hailendi. Where the hospital was built, the Lady Grigg. We had our houses, our wajomba's, they were all moved. You see, from there, where the 'Blue Room'[a restaurant] is, Sheikh Jundani, upto Kilindini Rd, there were houses. Now where are they? Houses, like these ones, local houses. They were knocked down. And there was nothing, no money. It was bad in those days...There was no money, none. There came an order, if the land-owner wanted the houses, you had to go...people weren't happy, some people had built very good houses, they were told 'knock

114. p.6, Msa District AR, 1929, KNA DC MSA 1/3.
115. Mbarak Hinawy - Under SoS, 14 May 1931, PRO CO 533 411/6; see also Janmohamed, 'A History of Mombasa..', p.309.
116. Int 71b.
117. Int 67a, 20a, 40a, 55a.

them down'. They were dying..'(118)

The Town Plan worked to separate the interests of land-owners and their tenants in a new and dramatic way - and so to undermine the networks that housed so many migrants to Mombasa.

In Cooper's terms, it was an attempt to change much of the residential space in Mombasa from 'illegal' space - housing unauthorised by law where space is 'allocated through diverse relations of affiliation and clientage' - to 'legal' space where 'space is exchanged through real estate agents and lawyers'(119). The tax provisions of the scheme meant that land-owners with 'undeveloped' land, which seems to have included land with unauthorised dwellings, were to be penalised(120). The transition in Mombasa was far from complete, and the state never asserted real control of space in Mombasa, but the scheme put a financial squeeze on householders which inevitably made the monetary part of the relationship with their tenants far more important. Evicted from one area, with little or no compensation, householders might rebuild in another area on borrowed finance - usually from Indians - and found it hard to offer long-term free accommodation by taking in newcomers as family members. Town planning did not lead to state control of space in Mombasa but it did ensure that financial considerations obtruded more frequently into the allocation of space.

The bulk of Mombasa's population, particularly its more recently arrived population, shifted westwards to the growing areas of Kaloleni, Sidiriya and Majengo. The

118. Int 71b, p.9
119. Cooper (ed), Struggle for the City, p.31
120. p.1, Msa District AR, 1929, KNA DC MSA 1/3.

change came swiftly, as the 1927 Annual Report remarked:

> The general trend of native housing of labour has been towards the Sidiriya, Kaloleni and Shimanzi areas, and this movement has been accentuated during the year by the demolitions under the Town Planning Scheme, and consequent establishment of Native Village Housing Schemes. It is estimated that the previously almost depopulated area to the northwest of Kilindini Road now has some 11,200 inhabitants whose numbers are increasing daily(121).

Clearly, a very large movement of population was underway, away from the established town and separated from it by a wide road and a belt of public buildings. It was a movement further encouraged by the enforcement of building controls in the Old Town, where court cases were brought against those adding extra accommodation space to their houses(122).

Here, the separation of householder and land-owner that had already begun to characterise Mombasan housing became complete. Plots were generally larger, with the houses of many different householders crammed onto them, and there was no room here for special relationships between land-owner and householder. Householders, moreover, had been made hostile to and suspicious of the intentions of land-owners by the evictions they had already suffered - some having been moved two or three times in a few years:

> People were just having their houses demolished for no reason, they had done nothing. it was like that,

121. p.7, Mombasa District AR, 1927, KNA PC Coast 1/10/110
122. Ag Governor - SoS, 18 Dec 1930, KNA AG/4/3111.

people being knocked around like footballs(123)

Companies, rather than individuals, owned much of the land - a large area of Majengo was owned by an estate company, which was in turn owned by the notorious European speculator Major Grogan(124). In 1930 a report noted the effects of the demolitions:

> ..the Medical Authorities took the opportunity of insisting on the erection of houses of an improved type. The natives concerned foresaw the possibility of making money by letting rooms and readily fell in with the suggestion, but not having the necessary capital they borrowed from Indians at rates of interest from 50% to 120%...The result is that rents of rooms range from Shs 10/- to Shs 25/- per month and, a still worse feature, numbers of houses are falling into the hands of Indian momey-lenders(125)

The renting of rooms under extremely cramped conditions was becoming more common:

> ..five or more natives hire a room and each pays his proportion of the rent, but in some cases a native hires a room and sublets to any who may require a night's lodging, and as many as ten may sleep in one room(126)

In all of this movement, the original aim of separating the casual labour from the Swahili in official housing

123. Int 71b, p.10.
124. Janmohamed, 'A History of Mombasa..', p.200
125. p.9, 'Report on native affairs in Mombasa', Dec 1930, KNA DC MSA 3/3.
126. ibid, p.10.

became lost - partly because the administration had found the money to compensate landowners but could not find that to fund the model schemes. The 'Native Villages', granted the official blessing of capital letters in the 1927 Annual Report, were private developments, and the 1926 plans were never implemented. The 1930 report referred to the original plans for government accommodation, but then noted the prevailing attitude:

> ..it is now suggested that the situation has been met by the development of privately owned land as native locations and although the conditions of the town are not satisfactory it is thought that some hardship would be caused were the Municipality to enter into competition in this matter(127).

The author of the report did not agree, and referred to the need for 'hostels where bachelor natives can obtain a night's lodging'(128).

The decision not to build was not, of course, made solely in deference to the interests of local land-owners. To a degree, it reflected a shortage of finance. Always a problem, this had become acute by 1930. The administration, had, in fact, lost control of the town planning scheme by the late 1920s, and the development of the new residential areas was not entirely what they had planned. In 1928, the DC observed forlornly that 'it is impossible at present to predict the ultimate position of the native residential area'(129). The changes taking place were beyond official control, for even in the face of clearances and evictions and the new financial

127. ibid., p.11.
128. ibid, p.10.
129. p.3, Msa District AR, 1928, KNA DC MSA 1/3.

pressures that resulted, Africans in Mombasa were exercising choice, were making the most of their options and foiling official attempts to plan and control their lives. There had been hopes that clearance would push Africans off the island(130), to Miritini or Mtongwe; the latter being described as 'a most desirable area for housing and controlling the native population'(131). However, the inconvenience of travelling to work from the mainland, the other options for employment which the island continued to offer, and the availability of private land to build on, all made the move to the mainland an unattractive one.

Despite this, the plan had to an extent worked. The relocations had separated the new areas from those where the Swahili were most firmly established. While many Swahili were among those who moved to the new areas, their position was weakened: their ability to take in newcomers as household members was diminished by the costs of moving and rebuilding and the new insecurity they faced. In 1929 it was reported that

> The area between Makupa Road and the railway is developing rapidly as native quarters. This location houses large numbers of the floating population of Mombasa who work at Kilindini Harbour(132).

This was, in a sense, a success for the administration, if a rather limited one. It was a success that did not

130. p.78, Native Affairs Department Annual Report for 1928, Nairobi 1930.
131. Res Comm, Msa - Ag Colonial Sec, 26 June 1925, KNA PC Coast 1/11/39.
132. p.78, Native Affairs Department Annual Report for 1929, Nairobi, 1930.

come as a result of the housing clearances alone(133), but the physical reshaping that these caused made possible a social reshaping, albeit an incomplete one. Some at least of Mombasa's casual labour force had become a 'floating population' separated physically from networks which previously had centred this work force in Mombasa, and so with fewer alternatives, with less support and more need to work for European employers for money. Mijikenda who came to Mombasa as casuals increasingly maintained their ties with the homestead, and kept their obligations to the economy of the homestead and to the demands which the state imposed on that economy. It was a victory that came rather late in the day,for soon, as Cooper has shown(134), official efforts were to take a very different direction, towards the establishment of a stable urban workforce (though one established on very different lines to the Swahili society of the period up to 1920s), and the elimination of the floating population which the administration had tried so determinedly to bring into being.

133. See chapter 5.
134. F Cooper, On the African waterfront..

5. 'Those who went before'

Changing networks, 1925-30

The ability of the people of Mombasa's local hinterland to avoid contract labour in the first three decades of colonial rule was intimately connected with the nature of their relationship with the people of Mombasa. This offered two distinct types of opportunity. First, relationships of kin between the different hinterland groups and between them and the Arabs and Swahili of the coast gave access to the products of the varied ecological zones of the coast. Within the homestead economy, networks of trade and credit financed from Mombasa combined with a local bartering economy of grains and palm-wine to provide an access to food and to some trade goods which was not reliant on a cash wage. The availability of considerable areas of coast land, owned by Arab, Indian and Swahili owners (and by some ailing European plantation companies) allowed hinterland people to migrate to coast lands in seasonal times of hardship, or permanently. Troubled by drought and cattle disease, Giriama from north of Kilifi could move to coast land near Mtwapa and diversify into an economy reliant more on coconut palms and maize than it was on cattle(1). Kauma could move from near Ganze down to Mwakirunge to try planting coconut palms in the wake of a major famine(2).

The second type of opportunities were markedly different to these in that they involved a transfer of obligations. These opportunities were mainly bound up with work in Mombasa or in its very local rural mainland. Usually, these involved individual women and men who came to Mombasa to escape from the demands of their homestead, or

1. Int 54a.
2. Int 20a.

through dissatisfaction with the division of wealth within it. Avoiding contract work, and attached to new urban patrons, they became part of the town's 'Swahili' population, and within the refuge of the city they were generally safe from the demands of the state for tax payments and regular work.

Since such migrants were also safe from the discipline of their homestead heads and rural elders, and had often effectively joined a Mombasan household, this form of migration was not favoured by the homestead heads. They were reluctant to see their juniors seeking any waged work, knowing that the juniors would, in seeking the casual work which placed fewest demands upon them, almost inevitably be drawn into urban networks that separated them from the homestead. There were occasional temporary migrations of large numbers of people, whole homesteads, from the hinterland to Mombasa, as in the famines of 1898-99, or 1918-19(3), but these were temporary migrations only; the men and women involved did not stay in Mombasa for more than a month or two, and while they found some casual labour they were excluded from access to the most lucrative form of casual labour, at the docks. This famine survival tactic did, however, rely partly on the presence of those previous migrants who had stayed permanently. While not recognising any financial obligation to the homestead or expecting anything from it, these earlier migrants might temporarily house their kin. In times when there was no famine, these earlier migrants housed and helped relatives who, like themselves, came as individuals seeking an alternative to the homestead.

These patterns changed in the later 1920s to make a

3. Int 45a, 41a.

number of the hinterland people who worked in Mombasa into genuine migrants, who sent money to and regularly returned to their homesteads. It was a change brought about partly by the numerous official measures that had been intended to change the relationship between Mombasa and the local hinterland. The effect of these was exacerbated by the continuing debate over ethnicity, a debate which intensified in the 1920s. More than either of these things, though, the increasing involvement of Mijikenda in Mombasa's casual labour force as migrants represented an adaptation by the workers involved to changing economic circumstances. The new pattern of involvement did not entirely replace the previous one, nor did it develop overnight, but the changing nature of the relationship between the people of the hinterland and the people and economy of Mombasa did have profound repercussions on the way the population of the hinterland defined themselves and presented their history.

* * *

In the mid-1920s, officials noted for the first time that Mijikenda from the hinterland ('Nyika' as they still called them), were going to work in Mombasa. In 1920, the DCs in Vanga (the then title for the district south of Mombasa) and Kilifi Districts had both remarked on Mijikenda reluctance to work, as others had before - the Acting DC Kilifi noted of the Nyika Reserve that 'practically not a single voluntary labourer has been found from that quarter except for Swahili and Arab shambas'(4); and the DC Vanga wrote that 'a few [Digo] go to Mombasa in search of work but the number is so small

4. Ag DC Kilifi - Ag PC, 7 Feb 1920, KNA PC Coast 1/9/52.

that it cannot really be taken into consideration'(5). In 1924, the DC Digo (Vanga District having by this time become Digo District) wrote of the Duruma that, 'They do not go out to work in any numbers'(6). It is clear that in fact numbers of Mijikenda had gone to Mombasa to work by this time, but that they lived in Mombasa not as 'Nyika' but as Swahili.

A change in this pattern was first noticed in Kilifi in 1923: in that year the DC wrote that 'Large numbers of Wanyika do casual work at the harbour and elsewhere in Mombasa'(7). Reports from Digo District in 1925 suggest a similar change:

> The Waduruma are working much more than previously and prefer to go to Mombasa and engage in daily work. They can thus earn a few shillings and return home again(8)

Other reports from Kilifi and from Mombasa refer to this change over the next few years(9). Mijikenda were for the first time going to Mombasa to work as Mijikenda, and were taking their earnings back with them to the homestead after a period of work:

> ..50% of the 1923 tax is now in. The money appears to have been earned entirely by a great increase in the numbers going out to work on the coast and

5. p.11, Vanga District Annual Report, 1920-21, KNA PC Coast 1/1/412.
6. p. 5, Digo District Annual Report, 1924, KNA DC KWL/1/10.
7. Kilifi District AR, 1923, KNA PC Coast 1/1/418.
8. p.17, Digo District AR, 1925, KNA PC Coast 1/1/347.
9. See eg Kilifi Intelligence Report, June 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/17/13.

> particularly at the Mombasa Harbour Works where the high rate of wages and the system of casual labour suits the Wanyika(10).

The theme of casual work to earn tax money is echoed in reports from Mombasa a few years later:

> Large numbers of Giriama and Duruma continue to come to Mombasa just before the taxes are collected in their districts and are employed largely as daily labour at the docks(11)

In 1927 it was even reported that Duruma were going to work on the docks in response to famine(12); a dramatic change from the situation fifteen years earlier when migration to squat on coastal lands would have been a more likely tactic. Mijikenda had begun to work as Mijikenda, with the aim of returning to the homestead, but as the DC Kilifi wrote in 1925: 'They have a rooted objection to signing on for any length of time'(13). They took only those casual jobs where their commitment was only for the day, and where they could leave or not turn up for work without fear of punishment.

It was a major change. The casual labour force of Mombasa had previously been a town institution, of Africans and Arabs living in the town: 'The hamals are mixed part Swahili and part Shihiri', Hobley wrote in 1916(14) . The

10. Kilifi Intelligence Report, Feb 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/17/13
11. Kilifi District AR, 1923, KNA PC Coast 1/1/418
12. p.3, Digo Station Diary, Feb 1927, KNA PC Coast 1/1/251
13. p.12, Kilifi District AR, 1924-25, KNA DC KFI 1/2.
14. PC - Director Military Labour, 16 April 1916, KNA PC Coast 1/9/42.

partial transformation of this labour force involved the development of new networks, particularly in the mobilisation of labour. There was, in a sense, a change in the nature of the institutions around which the networks of casual labour were structured.

Mijikenda migrants had until the 1920s often relied for initial contact on townspeople to whom they had some blood relationship, a relationship based on clan or family ties outside the town: it was these people; aunts, uncles and clan members, to whom migrants would first come, for shelter. Some informants described such people to me as waliotangulia, or waliokwenda mbele, literally 'those who went before'(15). They were people who had not only gone before but who had stayed, and their stories were varied:

> ..there was one of my great-uncles, a Muslim, he ran away, he married a wife there [Mombasa], he stayed there, until he died there...he ran away because he sold his nephew, he sold him to the Arabs, and he was going to be killed by his father(16);

> ..there was a great-uncle, my grand-father's elder brother, he left here because he was mad, he even cut my grandfather with a knife, then he ran to Mombasa and studied Islam, and he got better(17).

Newcomers depended for initial survival on such contacts. Yet to continue living in the town, they could not rely on this link alone, and to find jobs and more permanent housing required access to other networks. A newcomer had

15. Int 44a, 34a, 26b, CHONYI/2.
16. Int CHONYI/2, p.2.
17. Int 27a, p.1.

to rely on 'those who went before' to provide contacts - as the first of a chain of relationships or acquaintanceships forming a network that led to a job, or a room. Yet these other networks were not formed in the same way as the relationship between the new arrival and 'those who went before', for they did not operate through claims to a shared ethnicity outside the town; until the 1920s, someone could not find work in Mombasa simply by being for example a Giriama, or a Kauma. Access to casual jobs came through attachment to a town figure, a serang who was a Swahili, who employed people because they were his friends, his neighbours or his clients in the town and not according to their identity outside the town. The demands these serangs placed on the earnings of the worker made it anyway unlikely that they would keep actively reaffirming their identity outside the town through remittances or visits back to the homestead.

During the 1920s some casual labour gangs began to be organised in new ways. Casual labour was still hired in gangs, for this suited both employers and workers. For employers, it put the costs of the control and recruitment of workers onto the workers themselves: the serangs had to make sure there were enough labourers and sort out the good from the bad. For workers it maintained a degree of autonomy and freedom from the state. The change came in the means through which a serang gathered a number of workers round himself: that is, how he identified them and decided which ones could be trusted. The network which the serang and his workers created was for the purpose of work, but it had needed some framework around which it could be built; and in the 1920s, ethnicity as defined by descent and blood relationships became important in a number of such networks.

At its most extreme, this led to the use of what officials would have called labour recruiters - rather than the 'labour touts' who could be arrested for their unwelcome activities(18). These were a new kind of 'those who went before':

> ..it's like, if I went before, I'd work, I'd be asked, "hey, in Giriama, in your place, are there people who can work?" So now I'll become a person who goes out there and tempts the youngsters, I'll tell them, "Let's go!..' So when I take them back to the serangi who sent me. "Thank you very much", he'll thank me. Now he'll take me as senior, I'll be more important than the casuals, I'm sent to find people, like a serangi. That's my job now, now I'm important..and the senior one is a Giriama like me, who came a long time ago, he's important now.(19)

These recruiters themselves needed to maintain links with their own homestead, to send back some of their wages and to encourage those who returned to work with them to do the same - so that future efforts at recruitment would meet with the cooperation of homestead heads, elders, and officials, rather than with resistance and the use against the recruiters of the laws against labour touts. Some of these new serangs had built their position, their knowledge of people and employers in Mombasa, through previous participation in them as townspeople, but had then reestablished their position in the homestead, and returned to the town as temporary migrants, who organised other workers as temporary migrants too(20).

18.See Chapter 3.
19. Int 34a, p.2. See also Int 73a
20. Int 54a

The new networks did not always recruit from the hinterland directly. There were still a stream of male migrants coming from the hinterland to stay with relatives or friends who had come to stay in the town. In Mombasa, they sought out the serangs from their own area, and through them found work(21). Some Mijikenda migrants to Mombasa could still find free housing, with settled kin(22) or in the houses of unrelated Arab or Swahili families, where they were housed free in return for some domestic labour(23). Yet the relationship was changing: these migrants ate apart from the men of the household, were no longer likely to be adopted by the householders and lose their ties with their homesteads. Their position in these houses was far more clearly that of domestic servants than of junior members of the household. Most importantly, the daily work which they did for cash was obtained through networks to which they had access as Giriama, for instance; not as townspeople.

For some, housing was organised by the same networks that brought them waged work, through contacts which they had through their ethnicity. One Giriama went to Mombasa in 1929 and at first stayed with Giriama friends in the house of an Arab, without paying any cash rent:

> ..they didn't rent, not at all....your sweat is taken instead, he [house-owner] had a wife, she cooks food, his wife, whether it's in a clay pot or a saucepan, in the morning she tells you, "here's some food, eat then wash out the pots"(24)

21. Int 34a, 45a
22. Int 40a, 56a
23. Int CHONYI/1
24. Int 47a, pp. 2-3.

Then, having found a job at a quarry through one of the overseers, who was a Giriama from the same area as himself, he was also found a room by this overseer:

> Kiraga wa Hare, the man from Gotani, at that time he was an overseer. He, when I arrived, then he said to me, "Let's go, I'll show you the house", he talked to the Swahili [house-owner] until they agreed, "This is my child, he wants a room, if you have one". "Oh yes, bring him, bring him!"(25)

Kiraga wa Hare was not the only serang who doubled as a housing agent. It was a situation that placed considerable power in the hands of the serang. One is reputed to have collected the rent money from those whom he had found housing, and himself paid the householder - a situation clearly ripe for abuse(26). Yet it was to these new agents that migrants increasingly turned, relying on networks to which they had access as migrants.

It was a system that developed particularly in newly-expanding areas of casual labour: the new serangs did not displace the previous ones, and their influence did not replace the previous system of urban networks, but grew up alongside it. One informant described the building boom that accompanied the town plan as the start of Mijikenda involvement in Mombasa(27). Numbers of Mijikenda worked for Indian or Arab contractors stirring cement and building walls, in jobs obtained through these networks structured around ethnicity. This was not the first time Mijikenda had worked in Mombasa, but it was the first time that considerable numbers had done so as Mijikenda. The

25. Int 47a, p.10
26. Int 34a
27. Int 71a.

beginning of these new networks did slightly precede the town plan, but the linkage of the two ideas is an apposite one; the town plan not only provided opportunities for these new networks to develop, but its effect on systems of patronage made these new networks all the more necessary. By placing strains on the ability of urban kin to house their rural relatives, it encouraged a system by which Mijikenda could come to Mombasa without a reliance on such contacts.

The new networks did not operate only in casual labour. As has been mentioned, numbers of Mijikenda men, and particularly young Mijikenda boys, still came to Mombasa to work as domestic servants in the houses of townspeople. One Jibana boy was taken to Mombasa by his father's younger brother, who was himself working as a domestic:

> My father's younger brother was working, in Bondeni, it was he who was sent. "If you have a child I want him to come and work for me". So my uncle came and took me(28).

This young man did not become incorporated into the household where he worked. He kept his identity as a Jibana, and left this work because the wage was insufficient to allow him to send money back to his homestead. He found instead another job, as a domestic for a Swahili, through the help of other Jibana in Mombasa(29). His story neatly illustrates the changing nature of involvement; for his uncle had first come to the town to stay with his elder sister, who had converted to Islam and settled in Kisauni with another converted Mijikenda, but the uncle himself did not convert to Islam,

28. Int 30a, p.3.
29. Int 30a.

or stay long in the town. In domestic labour, Swahili and Arabs continued to be employers but they were no longer always patrons or organisers.

The emphasis on hinterland contacts inevitably led to the development of little specialisations for different ethnic groups or clans. Just as the Rabai had earlier developed a near monopoly of palm-wine tapping in Mombasa, through recruiting friends and relatives, so the Chonyi had by the late 1920s established a little niche at Kilindini, cleaning the rust off lighters(30). In the 1920s, the expansion of the port at Kilindini was accompanied by a considerable expansion in work at the coaling and oiling terminal at Mbaraki. Giriama, Kauma and Digo serangs dominated the labouring force here(31), which seems to have become almost exclusively Mijikenda for a while:

> Coaling and discharge of oil is principally recruited from the wa-Digo and Giriama - the bulk of the former living on the mainland. Work is certainly hard but the pay is high(32)

At the coaling wharf, in fact, the two kinds of networks both seem to have operated, but among different types of labour. The winch-men, the more skilled casuals who operated the machinery, were drawn from the Swahili; people of heterogeneous origins but living permanently in the town, who obtained their knowledge of winches and acceptance as winch-drivers through people they knew in the town. One man of Digo origin, who lived in the Hailendi area and had become very much a town-man, described how, sometime around 1923 or 1924, he used his

30. Int 25a; CHONYI/1
31. Int 20b; 48a; 45a.
32. p.10, Mombasa District AR, 1926, KNA DC MSA 1/3

contacts in the town to move from basket-carrying to winching:

> I started off as a kibarua, I was carrying baskets, then I got tired, I made friends with the winch-men in the boats. I made friends, I got used to the winch, until I knew it..So I was tired of labouring, I gave up the baskets, and I lined up [in the search for work each morning] with the winchmen. The winchmen were here, the labourers here..So when I stood there, the late Salim bin Ali asked the winch-men, 'what about this lad?' They told him, 'he's a winchman'. I was taken on(33)

The labourers who carried the baskets of coal were Mijikenda - mostly Giriama, Kauma and Duruma(34). Coaling was the ultimate form of casual labour: payment was not even by the day but for each basket of coal carried, and so the work got its name - kikapu senti, or 'cent-a-basket'. In 1927 the DC suggested that some workers could earn as much as six shillings a day in this work(35). This is questionable, and the work was in any case extremely unpleasant, and unreliable:

> ..we carried baskets thus, three or four, hoisted them on our backs, and carried them to go over there. He [tally-clerk] comes and takes, one basket, a hela, one cent, heputs the coin in your mouth, you come and he puts in, one cent, until evening... you just get one and a half shillings, for hard work. You're black with coal, you're unrecognisable as a human being, you go and wash and sleep, in the

33. Int 67a, p.4
34. Int 48a, 45a.
35. Mombasa District AR, 1927, KNA PC Coast 1/10/110

> morning, you're ready early. If you're a bit late, just an hour, you don't get work, you go home. There's a crowd of people..every day. When you cough, there's just soot(36).

It seems unlikely that anybody ever did carry six hundred baskets of coal a day and earn six shillings, but even at a shilling and a half, coaling paid better than some contract employment: the railway was at this time paying workers fourteen shillings a month(37). As this informant noted, though, work was by no means guaranteed. A Chonyi, he found work through a Chonyi serang, and others were similarly reliant on their ethnicity to find work:

> Others were Kauma and they had their people, and Giriama had their serangs. He takes you, because he knows you are an ndugu..And the Giriama goes and takes from his side...We go and wait, for our serang to come, "you, come here, you, come, you come!"(38)

The relationship of kin, that is of being an ndugu, had come to be of significance in the hiring of labour.

There were other new areas of work in which these new networks of employment grew up. Pauling and Company and MacPhee, contractors working on the harbour works and the new Makupa causeway, were by 1924 employing more than 1,300 casuals between them - though by no means all of these worked every day(39). At the same time, other areas

36. Int 25a, p.1
37. Labour Inspection Reports, 1923-24, KNA PC Coast 1/9/53
38. Int 25a, p.2
39. Inspection Reports, 1923-24, KNA PC Coast 1/9/53

of employment, where networks based on patronage within the town had flourished, were in decline. Work at the Mombasa harbour was declining, and, most dramatically, the boat-men, symbol of Mombasa's casual labour in its most truculent mood, were rendered obsolete by the opening of five deep-water berths between 1924 and 1930(40). At the beginning of the 1930s, the opening of the Nyali Bridge to the north mainland affected other such networks. Unlike the other crossings to the island, the ferry to the north had never been a monopoly sold as a concession(41). Instead the service had been provided by a number of boats, owned by various Arabs and some Indians, and crewed by Africans(42); almost certainly the clients and dependants of the owners, as with the boat-men system. The opening of the bridge in 1931 did not immediately bankrupt the boat-owners, although it provided enough competition to inspire a number of acts of sabotage(43). The boats continued to carry a considerable amount of traffic, since they crossed directly to the end of the Malindi Road(44). The bridge was built as a business venture, reliant on tolls, and the bridge company was anxious to close down the ferry; which eventually it did by fencing off the foreshore on the Mombasa side of the crossing, with government permission(45). The kinds of work previously dominated by town patrons were disappearing.

It was these changes that provided the opportunities for new networks of labour to develop in the town. The cause

40. Int 49a
41. See the contents of KNA AG/4/3599
42. Kindy, Life and Politics.., pp.88-89
43. Manager, Nyali Bridge and Development Co Ltd - District Surveyor, 18 April 1935, KNA AG/4/2068
44. District Surveyor - Cmmr for Local Govt, Lands and Settlement.
45. Manager, Nyali Bridge and Development Co - District Surveyor, 18 April 1935; Attorney-General - Colonial Sec, 28 Sept 1936, KNA AG/4/2068.

of their development, however, lay partly in the hinterland. Until the 1920s, very little of the tax paid by Mijikenda seems to have come from wage labour, for Mijikenda avoided such labour unless it be in the town, in which case they were unlikely to remit money to the homestead to pay taxes. The local palm-wine trade, and the selling or mortgaging of trees, cattle or or crops were more likely sources of tax-money. Restrictions on the palm-wine trade and against small-scale traders in Mombasa had reduced the returns from these sources. While these measures decreased the chances Mijikenda had of obtaining cash through means other than wage labour, the demands on the Mijikenda for cash were increasing.

There were enormous rises in taxes, particularly in 1921, which even Hobley felt were excessive(46), and the level of taxation doubled between 1910 and 1922(47), but it was not only an increase in the rate per capita that affected the Mijikenda. There was a considerable increase of efficiency in the collection of the tax. While the tax rate doubled, the takings of Hut and Poll tax in Vanga District in 1923 were six times what they had been in 1911(48). The population of the district had grown considerably in this period, but clearly Mijikenda homesteads were facing enormously increased tax demands, even as their access to cash through other means was limited. The livestock-owning Mijikenda increased their sale of stock and the price of cattle seems to have fallen considerably as a result. In 1912, bulls were selling at Rabai for thirty-five rupees and cows for seventy-five

46. p.200, CW Hobley, 'Some native problems in Eastern Africa', JAS, XVII, 1922-23.
47. Clayton and Savage, Government and Labour.., pp.139-146.
48. See record of tax revenues, 1910-26, in KNA DC KWL 10/1

rupees. In 1922, cattle were selling at Mariakani for less than twenty shillings, or ten rupees(49). The DC Kilifi observed that

> Native stock is noticeably decreasing owing to their habit of selling it to pay Tax. Unless the Wanyika soon develop the habit of going out to work they will become very impoverished indeed(50)

In these circumstances, even though wage-labour in one sense threatened the homestead by the risk it carried that the labourer would not return, it was becoming essential to the homestead that some of its members should go out to work.

As the number of Mijikenda men seeking wage-labour increased, the terms on which it was available deteriorated. It was this deterioration which changed the attitude of migrants to the town, and the way in which they came to it. Mijikenda young men, were forced during the 1920s to reassess the opportunities offered by long-term involvement in the town, and to question whether it was still an attractive alternative to their position in the homestead. It was their reassessment of the options available which led them to seek new ways of involvement in the labour market of Mombasa, and these changes themselves provided new ways to avoid regular work

It was a reassessment dominated by one major consideration: wages dropped considerably in the 1920s. In dock labour, the major form of casual labour, wages in

49. Rabai Sub-district AR, 1911-12, KNA PC Coast 1/1/185; and SCC - SC Kismayu, 21 Sept 1922, KNA PC Coast 1/2/95.
50. Kilifi District AR, 1923, KNA DC KFI 1/1

1911-12 had been about Rs 1/25 a day(51). In 1918, at the peak of the labour shortage in the docks, wages had more than doubled, to Rs 2/55 a day(52). The increase was not maintained in the post-war period. The change of currency from rupees to shillings in 1920-21 (one rupee being valued at two shillings) allowed employers to reduce wages all over Kenya, and Mombasa seems to have been no exception(53). During the 1920s, daily wages on the docks were between Shs 2 and Shs 2/50 - half what they were in 1918, though there had been no drop in prices(54). By the end of the decade, wages on the docks were down to Shs 1/50 to 2/- per day(55). In 1928, workers cleaning lighters at Kilindini earned only two shillings a day(56). Other casual workers fared even worse. In 1924, Pauling's casual workers took home only Sh 1/- to Shs 1/50 each day(57). It is not clear what caused this steady decline in real wages in the 1920s; but in casual labour, at least, there were in the 1920s no more complaints of labour shortages, and there seems rather to have been a general surplus of labour. Workers were finding it increasingly hard to find work each day as Mombasa's population swelled(58).

It is difficult to make sense of the population figures given for Mombasa over the years - sometimes they are for the Island, sometimes for the District, and as was occasionally admitted by the DCs who presented them, the figures were based largely on guess-work(59). People

51. Cooper, On the African waterfront.., p.27
52. Clayton and Savage, Government and Labour.., p.98.
53. Clayton and Savage, Government and Labour.., p.143.
54. Cooper, On the African waterfront.., p.32.
55. Appendix A, p.134, Native Affairs Dept Annual Report, Nairobi, 1930.
56. Int 25a.
57. Labour Inspection, 1923-24, KNA PC Coast 1/9/53.
58. Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters.., p.244.
59. p.5, Mombasa District AR, 1928, KNA DC MSA 1/3.

who did not wish to be taxed were not counted, generally speaking. The figures do make clear that there was considerable growth - the total population of the island went from an estimated 19,600 in 1913(60) to an equally estimated 30,000in 1922(61), and to 41,000 in the the 1931 census(62). The African population of the town was growing even faster than the total population. The 1921 figures suggested that there were 14,265 Africans on the island(63), while the 1931 census counted 21,352(64).

Much of this growth in the population was due to the arrival of large numbers of migrants from up-country. Wages in Mombasa were falling, but they were still significantly higher than those elsewhere in Kenya, and they drew in migrants from from all over the country and from Tanganyika. Rates of labour migrancy in Kenya were growing significantly in the first half of the 1920s(65). Cooper has suggested that it was these up-country migrants who were challenging Mijikenda for casual labour in Mombasa, forcing down wages and making it harder to find a job(66). The statistics are at first glance convincing: both Cooper and Janmohamed cite a 1925 report which suggests that only seventeen per cent of Mombasa's workforce were 'coastal', the Luo and the Kikuyu each outnumbering this small contingent(67). Yet these figures are flawed, for they are based on registered labour, and

60. p.27, in Political record Book, KNA DC MSA 8/2.
61. p.1, Mombasa District AR, 1922, KNA DC MSA 1/3.
62. p.3, Mombasa District AR, 1931, KNA DC MSA 1/4.
63. p.1, Mombasa District AR, 1922, KNA DC MSA 1/3
64. p.3, Mombasa District AR, 1931, KNA DC MSA 1/4.
65. G Kitching, Class and Economic change in Kenya; the making of an African petite bourgeoisie, 1905-70, London/New Haven 1980, p.249.
66. Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters.., p.244.
67. Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters.., p.249; Janmohamed, 'A History of Mombasa..',p.358; both citing p.81, Native Affairs Department Annual Report for 1925.

at this time there was no compulsory registration of workers from coastal districts(68). Luo and Kikuyu coming from up-country would have kipandes, but Mijikenda and Swahili who worked on the coast would not. This explains the curious discrepancy between the 1925 figures and those given by Wilson thirty years later, when he suggested that the coastal part of Mombasa's labour force had declined from thirty-eight per cent in 1947 to nineteen per cent in 1957(69).

Moreover, while up-country labour dominated the contract labour force in Mombasa, informants rarely mention up-country workers in casual employ at this time. In 1919, 468 of the 492 contracted employees of the Conservancy and the Public Works Department were up-country workers(70). In 1924, of 1,087 contract workers in Mombasa, only ninety-nine were not from up-country, and sixty of these were Taita(71). Meanwhile, Cooper's latest work suggests that the Swahili, Mijikenda and Hadhrami maintained a remarkable dominance over casual dock labour until the late 1930s(72). The nature of hiring in the dock labour force was, after all, well suited to maintaining this type of dominance. While some up-country Africans became townspeople in the same way as had some Mijikenda(73), and so found access to dock-work and other kinds of casual labour, there was no overwhelming competition from them. The competition for such jobs was a result more of increased Mijikenda migration.

68. See chapter 3.
69. p.218, G Wilson, 'African labour in Mombasa', in G Wilson (ed) A social survey of Mombasa, Nairobi, 1957.
70. Labour Inspection Reports, 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/9/53
71. Labour Inspection Reports, 1923-24, KNA PC Coast 1/9/53
72. Cooper, On the African waterfront.., p.32
73. Janmohamed, 'A history of Mombasa..', p.353.

In this environment, where there were often more seeking casual work than there was work available, wages dropped steadily in their real value. This in itself encouraged young migrant men to retain contact with their homesteads: labour reproduced entirely within Mombasa was more expensive. Some lived as junior members of town households, but life in town was expensive for those who married or supported concubines in Mombasa, and who thus had dependants whose food, water and firewood all had to be bought with their wages. The claims on their wages made by the homestead may have been unwelcome, but reliance on a town wife may have been equally so, even though these wives cared for them:

> If you keep a woman in the house your father can't get any money. You use it all, it's comfortable, there's no hardship. Then you say to her "I'm going to work", she goes to the shop, she buys doughnuts. The husbands late, she goes and buys a massive load of doughnuts, she takes them and gives them to her friends, and at the end of the month it's you who pays..better to live on your own.(74)

When their real income was shrinking, Mijikenda migrants were forced to seek cheaper ways of living. For men, there was another problem with reliance on the town and abandonment of the homestead. While workers with wages in their pocket could find women to cook for them, wash their clothes and sleep with them, men who were getting too old to work had more difficulty: 'when you're old, those women don't want you any more, you come back here to live here'(75). With the cost of housing and of living generally rising, those unable to earn could not expect to

74. Int 47a, p.6.
75. Int CHONYI/2, p.2

be supported. As some informants said, Mombasa yapapasa, a phrase perhaps best rendered as 'Mombasa lulls you into a false sense of security'(76). Sending money back to the homestead, keeping a wife and children there, provided a more effective form of social security.

> If you work in Mombasa, you must remember where you come from. In Mombasa you will plant nothing, what can you plant in Mombasa? If you are at your home, you can plant crops which tomorrow will benefit you(77).

The planting was a literal as well as a figurative one. The planting of coconut palms spread northwards along the ridge from Rabai during the first half of this century. In Jibana, it is a change explicitly connected with investment by Jibana who had worked on the coast(78). Herlehy has noted that coconut palms were already spreading along the northern Mijikenda ridge at the end of the nineteenth century(79), but their current superabundance is a result of planting in the twenties and thirties, according to informants(80). Coconut palms have not made many Mijikenda rich, but they have been a steady source of income, and a desirable one. One informant told of how his father was mocked for planting palms:

> My father was wise, he began planting palms, and the others mocked him, "what are you going to do with those palms? Now you're planting trees on your land, where will you cultivate?"(81)

76. Int 8a, p.1.
77. Int 27a, p.1
78. Int 29a; 30a.
79. Herlehy, 'Ties that bind..', p.288-89
80. Int 22a.
81. Int 29a, p.1

Their mockery soon turned to jealousy, however:

> [they asked]"How come you're the only one who is harvesting nuts?"
> [he answered] "Well, I'm the only one who planted palm trees"(82)

Planting palms was, moreover, a long-term investment. As well as buying the sprouted nuts, which were not expensive, a migrant had to either help support a wife and other members of the homestead or pay a casual labourer to look after the young trees, keep them free from weeds and so on, for seven years before they bore fruit. On the other hand, this was a form of wealth which could not be appropriated by a homestead head; money given to the homestead head was his to use as he liked, whatever the desires of the junior who earned it, but palm trees which the junior planted were his own.

It seems that the commitment of migrants to the homestead was expressed through remittance. No informant suggested any seasonal pattern to migration, fitting labour migrancy with the demands of the agricultural economy. Rather, they maintained their place in the homestead solely by sending back a part of their wages, a pattern which Kitching has noted elsewhere(83). Under these circumstances, women who remained in the homestead bore an increasing share of the burden of agricultural labour.

While palms offered many young Mijikenda men an improved option for investing in the homestead economy, the desire of migrants to retain their place in the homestead was not due to any improvement in the returns from homestead

82. ibid.
83. Kitching, Class and Economic Change.., p.253

trade in Trade Centres had not improved producer prices:

> The traders in these centres are always Indians who arrange prices to suit themselves so that even if there be 20 shops there is no competition(84)

The once active export market in Mijikenda grain suffered from the introduction of maize-grading in 1923(85), although exports to the Benadir coast were excluded from this(86). Mombasa's maize market was increasingly supplied by maize from up-country, brought in cheaply by the railway(87), while Mijikenda producers who were at any distance from the creeks were hampered by transport problems. The first regular motor-transport along the northern ridge to Jibana and Chonyi was not instituted until the 1940s(88). While whole homesteads could and did move to squat on coastal lands, with better transport, they faced here the insecurity of the squatter, unwilling to invest in trees when they might be expelled from their land(89).

Nor is it easy to see the increasing desire of Mijikenda to retain links with their homestead as a result of a change in the terms of young men's place in the homestead. It is possible that it was easier for young men to escape from the homestead heads control and establish their own small homesteads at an early age, given that colonial rule offered a form of security that was not dependent solely

84. p.3 'Coastal Trade', SCC, 11 May 1923, KNA PCCoast 1/1/165
85. Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters.., p.263.
86. 'Precis of meeting to consider commitments by CNC in respect of Coast Trade', KNA PC Coast 1/1/165.
87. Paras 4303 and 4304, also 4402 Minutes of Evidence to Joint Select Cttee, 1 May 1931, PRO CO 533 411/6
88. Int 30a.
89. Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters.., p.234; Int 17b.

upon membership of a large homestead. The dangers of kidnapping or cattle-raiding by others had diminished, and Champion argued as early as 1913 that this was allowing young men to establish their own homesteads as soon as they were married(90). Yet this is an overly rosy view of the impact of the pax britannica. The law and security it offered were, after all, administered through elders and headmen, and young men without protectors might find themselves particularly exposed to new and peculiarly colonial dangers - notably to extra demands for compulsory labour under the Native Authority Ordinance(91). During the First World War, the danger of conscription added to this problem.

The administration in fact tried repeatedly to increase the power of elders and to enlist them as collaborators in the administration, and during the 1920s this policy was continued in a novel form with the development of the Local Native Councils(LNCs) of Digo and Malindi. When the coastal administration was first ordered to oversee the creation of such councils, the response was hostile(92). Lambert, the DC Malindi, argued that the Mijikenda were too 'backward' for this kind of government, but that it would be admirably suited to the Arabs and Swahili(93). This argument was, curiously, entirely contradictory to Beech's ideas about the inability of the Swahili to govern themselves in 1913(94), but retained the basic theme of Beech and Hobley's policy: that the Swahili and the Mijikenda should be governed by entirely different systems. When the SCC bowed to irresistible pressure from

90. Champion, The Agiryama.., p.10.
91. Int 22a.
92. SCC - CNC, 13 Dec 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/12/286
93. Ag DC Malindi - SCC, 19 Nov 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/12/286
94. See chapter 3.

the Governor to introduce councils for the Mijikenda(95) the Swahili and Arabs were definitely excluded from the councils(96): the administrative separation of the two groups being thus maintained.

Having initially resisted the introduction of these councils, on the grounds that the Mijikenda were unprepared for such a sophisticated form of government, officials then tried to use them to bolster the power of the elders. Half of the council members were appointed by the government, and were all headmen(97). The other half were, in theory, elected by the population at open meetings, and were intended to include men representing the younger age-grades. Yet these representatives were selected by the elders(98) - and all the nominated candidates had to be approved by the DC(99). The only complaint against this arrangement recorded was that of Josiah Rimba, one of the small number of Mijikenda Christians at the time. He appealed for the appointment of more 'educated' members to the LNC, an appeal that was denied(100). Rimba did, however, cooperate with the elders in a number of resolutions intended to reduce the freedom of their juniors.

The members of the LNCs were strikingly unsure of their power over other elders and over younger Mijikenda. Several times they sought the reassurance of government legislation in support of their resolutions, only to be

95. SCC - all DCs, 19 Jan 1925, KNA PC Coast 1/12/286
96. A de V Wade, for CNC - SCC, 16 Feb 1925, KNA PC Coast 1/12/286.
97. ADC Kilifi - SCC, 10 June 1925; DC Malindi - SCC, 9 June 1925, KNA PC Coast 1/12/286
98. DC Kilifi - SCC, 3 April 1925, KNA PC Coast 1/12/286.
99. ibid.
100. Rimba - CNC, 29 Oct 1925; SCC - CNC, 29 Oct 1925, KNA PC Coast 1/12/286.

told that this was not needed(101). The major concern of the council members themselves seems to have been health care and the spending of market fees, but since their resolutions on these subjects were generally vetoed by the SCC(102), the most important resolutions they passed were those pressed on them by officials. The first was to ban the drinking of palm-wine by young men (a category which included married men whose own children had not yet married) and women(103). They also, after particularly intense prodding by the DCs, introduced in 1927 a one shilling per head annual tax on all males(104). Officials encouraged them to use compulsory labour in the various building schemes that were approved, in the face of an apparent reluctance to do so that also reflects the headmen's perception of their limited powers(105). All this suggests that while the power of headmen and other elders may have declined, and it might have been increasingly possible for young men to found their own homesteads, the administration was making determined efforts to reverse this process. Young men still frequently came into conflict with their homestead heads. One piece of LNC legislation, in 1937, suggests that conflict within homesteads over bridewealth - over whether the homestead head used his wealth to buy wives for himself or for his juniors - was still intense. The Malindi LNC outlawed marriage between a son and any of the wives of his deceased father, and the DC noted:

101. See eg CNC - SCC, 1 Dec 1926; Minutes Digo LNC 15 Oct 1927; CNC - SCC, 26 Jan 1928, KNA PC Coast 1/12/281.
102. See eg Ag DC Digo - SCC, 26 Nov 1925; and CNC - SCC, 6 March 1926, KNA PC Coast 1/12/281.
103. Minutes, Malindi LNC, 1 Nov 1925, KNA PC Coast 1/12/244; DC Digo - SCC, 25 Jan 1926, KNA PC Coast 1/12/281.
104. Minutes, Digo LNC, 15 Oct 1927, KNA PC Coast 1/12/281.
105. Ag SCC - AG DC Kwale, 28 April 1926, KNA PC Coast 1/12/281

> It was alleged by most of the African members of the council that patricide is not uncommon locally, and is usually committed by an unmarried son on account of a desire for one of his father's younger wives(106)

The increasing desire of Mijikenda young men to retain contact with the homestead was more to do with increasing insecurity within Mombasa than with improved terms of participation within the homestead economy.

The danger of abandonment in old age in Mombasa was combined with another factor - the ritual importance of returning to the area of one's birth to be buried(107). For some of those who became incorporated into town families, this did not matter; they were buried as Muslims in the town graveyards of their adoptive families(108). But for those whose position was less secure, who had not become part of some wealthy family but had nonetheless established their lives in the town, burial was an extra problem. Abandoned and without support as old men, they might also find themselves abandoned in death.

The danger of exclusion, of being rejected by town patrons, was not only a result of the rising cost of living in Mombasa. It grew also from the continuing redefinition of ethnicity prompted by colonial attempts to categorise the population as 'native' and 'non-native' and by the devaluation of the term Swahili in a colonial discourse which identified them as the idlers and cheats of the coast population(109).

106. See Resolution No. 4 of 1937, Kilifi[Malindi] LNC, KNA PC Coast 2/16/11.
107. Int 39a.
108. Int 61b, 21b.
109. See Chapter 3.

The tensions occasioned by the creation of separate legal categories for Arabs and others have already been mentioned. The tensions were not a creation of colonial rule(110); already in the nineteenth century some status had been attached to an Arab ancestry, and Swahili clans such as the Nabahani of Pate had sought to improve their status by claiming origins from Arabian settlers(111). The role of theoretical Arab suzerainty in legitimating British rule and the consequent institutionalisation of an Arab bureaucracy had exacerbated these tendencies, however - the system of indirect rule and the sharing of power by Arab and Swahili clan heads(112) had been replaced by a system in which Arab officials received government salaries while Swahili clan-heads were deemed irrelevant(113). Legislation attempted to create clear boundaries where none existed. According to the Native Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance of 1910, a Swahili was a 'native'(114). A rapidly passed amending ordinance defined Swahili:

> ..the term Swahili shall include a person of Asiatic origin neither of whose parents is of pure Asiatic descent. Whenever a question shall arise as to whether a person is a Swahili or not the onus shall be on such a person to prove that he is not

109. See chapter 3, above.

110. See Randall Pouwels, Horn and Crescent: cultural change and traditional Islam on the East African coast, 800-1900, Cambridge 1987, Chapter 5.

111. 'History of Pate', in Freeman-Grenville, Select Documents..,

112. Berg, 'Mombasa under the Busaidi Sultanate..', chapter 3.

113. Letter 5/44, Precis of mail to Mombasa, 27 Jan 1893, IBEA 53(23); also p.7, 'Memo on coast land difficulties', Watkins, 11 Oct 1913, KNA DC MSA 8/2.

114. Sect 2, Native Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance, KNA AG/4/798.

a Swahili(115)

The wording clearly implies that a stigma was attached to being Swahili. The increasingly precise definition of who was an Arab and who was not, and the concomitant danger of losing status by marriage and association with those of inadequate pedigree, pushed the Swahili and Arab communities of Mombasa into an increasingly tense and occasionally violent relationship in the 1920s(116). By 1930, while the Arabs of Mombasa claimed special treatment on the grounds that they had once been the rulers of the coast(117), a Bajun similarly asked for special treatment on the grounds that 'your petitioner is a member of the Bajun tribe of Arabs one of the earlier of the Arab colonising tribes on the Coast of East Africa'(118). These claims to higher status led to renegotiations of the boundaries of the Swahili.

While Swahili of the Twelve Tribes inveighed against the attitude of the Arabs to them, some of their leaders were in turn drawn into attempts to redefine who was a Swahili by retreating into use of the Twelve Tribes title alone and excluding from this group those who had more recently become Swahili, many of them Mijikenda, but also individuals with a variety of other origins, both ex-slave and up-country. It is a redefinition that still has an effect today; in the firm denials by some members of the Twelve Tribes of the Mijikenda claims that the Swahili are Mijikenda(119), and in the occasional revelation that

115. Section 2, Ordinance No 15 of 1910, KNA AG/4/798
116. Kindy, Life and Politics.., pp.35-39
117. Petition to Governor, May 1930, PRO CO 533 411/6
118. Petition to SoS, nd, 1930, KNA AG/4/3111
119. Int 61b.

some named individual was not <u>really</u> a Swahili, though generally accepted as such. This redefinition was clearly encouraged by the administration, whose condemnation of the Swahili was essentially a condemnation of the perceived permeability of this ethnicity - that it was too easy for people to become Swahili. The distinction between upper- and lower-class Swahili became crucial:

> It was agreed that members of those families who were able to prove that they were of such grade in the Tissia Taifa or the Thelatha Taifa that they would have been recognised by the Zanzibar Government as Arabs, should also be accorded the status and treatment of Arabs by this government(120).

The use of the Arabicised clan-names within the Tissia Taifa and the Thelatha Taifa increasingly separated the Swahili into upper and lower classes - with the implication that the lower-class were not true Swahili, but hangers-on, and it was they who caused the problems.

> It is not really difficult for anyone with any knowledge of the coast people to differentiate between original members of the twelve tribes and followers of the same. The former can personally give Arabic clan origin whereas the latter can only show Nyika origin(121).

The carrot of 'non-native' identity (and the right to vote that went with it) was proffered in return for the separation of the true Swahili from the rest. Some Swahili

120. Ag CNC - PC, 9 Dec 1920, KNA PC Coast 1/14/160.
121. SCC - CNC, 13 May 1925, KNA PC Coast 1/10/120B.

clan-heads were eager to accept the deal, as the SCC wrote of one meeting:

> ..those who were present recognised that all members of the twelve tribes were not of the same status, and that the privileges asked for would only be accorded in part and not as a whole(122).

In encouraging this redefinition of who was really a member of the Twelve Tribes, the administration specifically referred to the permeability of Swahili identity as a problem, once again calling on images of corruption and purity:

> ..The Sheikhs and those of better families, viz those of whom who have kept themselves fairly pure by marriage with Arabs, consider themselves and are considered as Arabs.
> Those members, however, and they consist of the majority, who have intermarried with Wanyika and Waswahili aregenerally looked upon as Swahilis. The matter would be easy if all members were of the same class as the Sheikhs or Elders but the majority have so intermingled and intermarried with the Wanyika and natives that they are hardly distinguishable from them(123)

Association with Mijikenda endangered the status of Twelve Tribes members, and the resulting attempts to separate the 'real' Twelve Tribes from their followers changed the nature of ethnicity on the coast. It was no longer a negotiable thing, which could be changed as an

122. SCC - Govr Private Sec, 28 June 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/14/160
123. ibid.

expression of changing attachments and obligations; it had become fixed. Followers of the Twelve Tribes were not really Twelve Tribes members; even though the Twelve Tribes in truth had no common origin and many of those who established themselves as the true members had an ancestry not dissimilar to that of those rejected as followers. Some of the Twelve Tribes even offered to separate out the 'true' Swahili from the fakes:

> Sudi bin Ali claimed that they could point out who was a real member of the Twelve Tribes and who was a follower(124)

Some Twelve Tribes Swahili already had traditions of origin in the Gulf, and with such encouragement these became more and more common. The adoption of Singwaya as a place of origin had spread among the Mijikenda as a historical explanation of their closeness to the Swahili and their claims upon them as relatives. Yet almost as the Mijikenda were doing so, the perceived need for Swahili to differentiate themselves from the people of the hinterland, and the status attached to Arabian origins, meant that fewer and fewer Twelve Tribes Swahili traced their origins to Singwaya.

Significantly, after 1920 officials stopped using the term 'Swahili' as a blanket term for all the African inhabitants of Mombasa, and instead began to use it selectively, restricting it to the Twelve Tribes and encouraging the population to differentiate itself.The Swahili population of Mombasa District dropped from 18,000 in 1917 to 1,063 in 1921, according to official

124. Minutes of Govr's meeting with the Afro-Asian Assoc, 22 April 1932, PRO CO 533 425/20.

figures(125). This does not mean that the people in question had changed their own definitions of themselves, but it does make clear a determination on the part of officials to redefine who was Swahili and so to restrict access to the group. In 1930, a report said of the Twelve Tribes: 'they are the owners of considerable property and the majority of them pay non-native tax'(126). In the 1920s and 1930s, this differentiation was to have a dramatic effect on some individual Mijikenda who had joined Swahili or Arab households but then found themselves excluded from the group. One Ribe man, converted to Islam by an Arab 'father' who also employed him, was rejected by the natural son of this patron when the old man died.

> I stayed in Changamwe nine years, I even married there, a Digo woman, the old man paid the bride-price. Then, when the old man died, Nasoro [the son] said, "You're not an Arab, you're just following the religion, you inherit nothing", and I got angry and left, I even left my wife. Then, he stole all the wedding-things, the bed, everything. "You've just come as a religious follower, you're not an Arab.." I left and I came back here, here to my father(127)

Others had similar stories of rejection, sometimes framed in terms of being deceived by townspeople, and then awaking from this deception when their status as outsiders

125. PC - Military Commissioner for Labour, 25 July 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/1/328; pp.1-2, Mombasa District AR, 1921, KNA DC MSA 1/3.
126. p.4, 'Report on native affairs in Mombasa', Dec 1930, KNA DC MSA 3/3.
127. Int 39a, p.2

was suddenly emphasised by some event(128).

It was not only workers of Mijikenda origins who sought to reestablish a rural base in the 1920s. When the administration was seeking land for the settlement of 'detribalised' Africans in 1928, the PC noted that numbers of them were being absorbed by Mijikenda homesteads(129), and the DC Digo noted in 1927 that ex-slaves who once had flocked to Mombasa were similarly being taken in as members of Duruma homesteads, and given wives by the homestead heads(130). Mombasa was clearly losing its attraction as a long-term home.

Mijikenda, threatened by both rising costs and increasing insecurity in the town, sought methods of participation in the casual labour markets of the town that did not cut them off from the homestead - and so they turned to casual labour networks that were organised around their identity within the homestead. In doing so, they had while in the town a standard of living considerably lower than that of migrants who came and were adopted into the town and were still earning money - mostly they had no wives to cook for them, nor were they fed in the household of town patrons. Some of the coal-carriers were reduced to sleeping in disused sheds around the Mwembe Tayari area and cooking their own food at the end of a day's work(131) - not a life-style that was sustainable over any period of time. Through staying in touch with the homestead, and returning there regularly to their wives, they were able to continue in casual work even as the real wages of the work

128. Int 58a.
129. PC - CNC, 15 Feb 1928, KNA PC Coast 1/11/46
130. DC Digo - Ag. SCC, 7 Dec 1927, KNA PC Coast 1/11/46
131. Int 45a.

dropped - for casual work was still preferable to long-term discipline and a daily compulsion to go to work. For migrants wishing to play a part in the agricultural economy of the local hinterland, casual labour had the further advantage that they could at any time leave Mombasa and return to the homestead. It was these migrants who came to form the 'residuum', uncommitted to urban life but living in the town, which was to cause such problems for administrators in the later 1930s, a residuum whose lives 'straddled' town and country(132). In the 1920s, however, it was a welcome enough development for employers; these workers were, as Wolpe has argued of migrants in South Africa, subsidised by the rural homestead(133), and it was this that allowed employers of casual labour to reduce the real wages of casuals through the 1920s and, in the early 1930s, to cut even their cash wages.

The development of networks of Giriama, Jibana, Kauma and so on within the town as fairly long-term, though migrant, residents, began the movement towards a new ethnic identity for these people. While I have used the term Mijikenda frequently of the period up to 1930, it is essentially anachronistic - there were no Mijikenda. The word was not first used until 1924 when a Council in the Digo area south of Mombasa adopted Midzichenda, 'Nine Towns', as its title(134). It was a literally very accurate title: the Council in question was made up of elders from nine settlements in the area. It was not until the 1940s that the word came into common use with a new meaning - as referring nine of the peoples who had

132. Cooper (ed), Struggle for the City.., p.19
133. H Wolpe, 'Capitalism and cheap labour power in South Africa: from segregation to Apartheid', Economy and Society, 1, 4, 1972, pp.425-426.
134. Station Diary, Digo, 5 April 1924, KNA DC KWL 5/1.

previously been called the Nyika, and the substitution of Nyika by Mijikenda does not appear in the anthropological literature until Independence(135). It is now a very firmly established term, a definite ethnic category, an historical truth taught in schools - and a term which some elderly informants insist was in common use when they were young, despite all the evidence to the contrary(136). The development this identity, if not the use of the new name, can, however, be traced back to the 1920s.

Before the 1920s, the people of the hinterland were called Nyika, people who lived inland and as such were essentially defined as being different from the Arabs and Swahili of the coast; just as the Swahili derived their name from the Arabic for the coast, and so were in a sense defined by not living inland. The terms Swahili and Nyika were in opposition, expressive of a cultural divide, but in this very opposition they imply a unity, suggesting that the identities were inter-reliant, and the cultures complementary. While some Mijikenda did live near or even on the coast - as with some of the Digo south of Mombasa and some of the northern Mijikenda around Mombasa and Mtwapa - they did not have a maritime coastal culture. Stories of these groups, collected now and early in this century(137), emphasise that they were not familiar with boats, in contrast to Arab immigrants and the Swahili; the use of even small boats by the Mijikenda is a very recent development. Ethnicity at the general level of Swahili and Nyika was defined not necessarily by birth but by the membership of networks of kin, which might be fictive - to survive in the town or in the hinterland, it was

135. See eg AHJ Prins Coastal tribes of the Northeastern Bantu.
136. Int 38a.
137. EAS, (W), 29 Sept 1906; Int 5a; MHT 65.

necessary to have access to the appropriate networks: to belong to a clan or family that gave such access, and so to share the ethnicity of this family and the associated society.

Those Mijikenda or other Africans who had come to live for any period of time in Mombasa, as part of a coastal, urban, society, were incorporated into that society; as newcomers, they came as the dependants of established clans or households, and in their incorporation to these households they became part of that clan and part of the wider grouping of Swahili, since they had left the Nyika. Aware of their family origins, they could and did still recognise ties to relatives who came to the town, but in the wider sense they were Swahili, their obligations and claims being within the town: they danced and married and made such social payments as bridewealth, and funeral payments, within the town.

The development in the 1920s of networks within the town that relied on an identity established outside the town as their motivating force called for a different ethnicity. Nyika who lived for any time within the town had previously not been considered to be Nyika - by staying within the town they had acquired another identity. Now, the complementarity of the two identities had been disturbed; people from the local hinterland were coming to Mombasa and organising themselves according to their hinterland identities, while Swahili of the town were themselves undermining the incorporative relationships that had been the basis of the previous distinction between Nyika and Swahili. In place of the term Swahili, numbers of townspeople were seeking to define themselves solely as Twelve Tribes members, an identity which was as exclusive as that of Swahili had been inclusive.

The new networks of labour were not always exclusive to particular hinterland groups - the movements of men and women, of intermarriage and migration, between the different Nyika groups gave Giriama, for example, access to the labour gangs run by Kauma serangs(138) - so that the individual group names were not sufficient to denote the perceived links between the groups: the perception of the common position and close relationships between Digo, Duruma, Ribe and others required some expression.

The historical basis of this perceived unity had already been laid by the Singwaya origin stories (stories of origin which now acted to set the people of the hinterland apart from those Twelve Tribes who claimed origins in the Gulf), but it was a unity that lacked a name for some years. A new, Mijikenda, identity did not develop overnight in a completely functional response to the change in the nature of Mijikenda involvement in Mombasa, and with the Swahili and Arabs generally. The need for an identity for the hinterland peoples which did not rely on an opposition (and an implied complementarity) between them and the people of the coastal towns did not promptly produce a new identity that was accepted by everybody. Yet the development of this new identity was rooted in the increasing social distance between the peoples of the hinterland and the Swahili and Arabs of the town. When, in the 1940s, a small group of Mijikenda living in Mombasa founded the Mijikenda Union in a rather short-lived attempt to provide a political expression of their shared interests, they provided a label for this perceived unity(139). There is a curious story of the origins of this Union which encapsulates the continuing overlap and confusion between Swahili and Mijikenda identity and the

138. Int 45a.
139. Int 71b.

tensions which encouraged the division between the two.

In his list of the leaders of the Nine Tribes of the Mombasa Swahili, Berg mentions one Ali bin Muhammed al-Kilifi, who was installed as leader in 1925(140). More usually known as Muses Muhammed, this man started life as a boat-man, but later built up considerable wealth for himself through his ship-chandlering business in Mombasa, with the help of a loan from his elder brother(141). A number of different informants, however, insisted that he was a Kauma by birth(142), who had come to Mombasa as a child and become a Swahili of the Kilifi clan - the Kilifi being the Mombasa relatives of the Ribe, and the Kauma being close relatives of the Ribe. Muses is an often-quoted example of the way in which the Swahili of Mombasa could use their close kin relationships with the Mijikenda to advantage. He employed Mijikenda casual labourers in the town(143), held mortgages on the farms of Mijikenda in the area between Kaloleni and the sea(144), and owned an estate near Kilifi, on which numbers of Mijikenda squatters lived and worked(145). According to one informant, he secretly provided funding for the Mijikenda Union when it was begun in the 1940s, despite his acceptance in his adopted identity as a Nine Tribes member(146). Another informant confirmed the story, suggesting that Muses was prompted to do this by a dispute with the Arab governor of Mombasa of the time, who refused to grant Muses 'non-native' status and cast aspersions on

140. 'Succession of tamims in the nine tribes of Mombasa', Berg, nd, typescript in Ft Jesus Library, Mombasa,
141. Int 71b.
142. Int 50a; Int 5c; Int 68a.
143. Int 26c.
144. Int 26c; 68a.
145. Int 30a.
146. Int 68a.

his parentage(147).

Whether the story is true or not is unclear; certainly, Muses, whatever his origins, is now firmly identified as a Nine Tribes member, and in this role has a particular place in other Mijikenda stories of the town(148). Yet the confusion between the Nine Tribes and the Mijikenda that this story suggests is a common one: despite the efforts made by officials and some Twelve Tribes members to differentiate the groups, they are easily run together by some informants:

> Ah, Ali bin Muhammed. They are the Swahili who are called Tissia Taifa, that is, Mijikenda. But they have taken religious interests, they have very much changed in religion. Now, their people are called Wakilifi. These Mijikenda, the Kauma and other tribes, when they were mixed up they became Wakilifi. Their origin is Mijikenda(149)

While historians and anthropologists carefully refer to the Nine tribes of Mombasa with the Arabic Tissia Taifa and the nine tribes of the hinterland as the Mijikenda or even more clearly the unSwahilicised Midzichenda, the members of the groups themselves are not so cautious. Both the Swahili Nine Tribes and the the hinterland nine tribes are referred to as the Miji Tisa. Just as the Swahili of Mombasa maintained nine as the constant and necessary number of constituent groups that made up the Nine Tribes, while often changing the names involved so that there were in total actually more than

147. Int 72a.
148.s ee below
149. Int 71b, p.5

nine groups(150), so Mijikenda informants today have difficulty in fixing and agreeing on a list, and in deciding whether the Pokomo, the Taita or the Segeju should be counted. Why the number nine should be important is unclear, but it has become significant for the Mijikenda as it was for the Swahili. It is not clear when this happened. Krapf referred to twelve tribes of the 'Wanika', and considered the Digo to be more than one tribe(151). In 1913 Champion made one ambiguous reference to the nine tribes(152), but since elsewhere he records ten groups of Nyika(153) the significance of this is unclear, and certainly in 1924 the use of the term Midzichenda by the Digo Council evoked no comments about the significance of the term.

While the name and the stories of origin that expressed the identity of the hinterland peoples were, ironically, drawn from their relationship with the Swahili, a set of historical cliches developed around this name and origin that expressed hostility to, and differentiation from, the people of Mombasa island. The history of the Mijikenda and Mombasa became, and remains, a history of dispossession, a dispossession which figures in the histories presented by every informant. All insist that Mombasa originally belonged to the Mijikenda. This claim has ceased to be an expression of a common history and interests and has become the first example of the theft of land from the Mijikenda by the Arabs, a theme continued in stories of the sale by Arabs of mainland areas.

150. See the list in KNA DC MSA 3/1; also p.29, Lambert, 'The Arab community and the Twelve Tribes of Mombasa', in Wilson, 'Social Survey of Mombasa', 1957, manuscript in KNA
151. Krapf, Travels and missionary labours.., p.159.
152. Champion, The Agiryama.., p.5.
153. ibid, p.3.

> At that time it was forest, all of Mombasa, it was a forest, people went to hunt animals. Went to kill animals. Their house, they slept at the place called the Fort. That's a rock, it was a rock, lived in like a house...that was the house of the Mijikenda. They hunted and brought meat home. When they saw this, they saw this was a good land to farm, they began to clear it, and farm. They farmed and prospered there, when they were beginning to prosper, the Arab came....The Arab came, when he came, he came as a guest like you, you have been given a seat to sit on. Me, the owner, I sit on the ground, I have sat on the ground because you're on the chair. So then, a stranger comes, and asks, "Who is the owner of this place?" I say, "I am." You say, "No, the one sitting up here on the chair, they own the country!" And so I'm chased off; in giving the Arab the chair, now you've given him the country(154)

The Swahili occupy a nebulous middle ground in these stories - on the one hand cited as evidence of the original occupation of Mombasa by the Mijikenda(155), and on the other dismissively referred to as being virtually the same as Arabs, and unrelated to the Mijikenda(156). The term Swahili carries the same opprobrium for some Mijikenda now as it did for colonial observers in the 1920s: 'a Swahili is a liar, a stealer'(157). In this presentation of the history of Mombasa, cliched figures play a major role. Ali bin Salim el-Busaidi appears as a virtually timeless figure, expressing the alliance that wealthy Arabs made with British rule, at the expense of the Mijikenda: 'it was just the Africans, the Mijikenda,

154. Int 43a, pp.2-3.
155. Int 20b.
156. Int CHONYI/2
157. Int 18a, p.2.

who were oppressed. The Arabs did no work. The Arabs maltreated us'(158). Asked about a number of different historical characters, usually Arab planters associated with the sale of land in Mijikenda areas, informants would identify them as 'Sere Ali' - Ali bin Salim(159). The Arabs are accused of other crimes. In modern Kenya, where education is widely perceived as the key to wealth, elderly informants also present their theme of dispossession in terms of education - the Arabs are said to have prevented the Mijikenda from studying: asserting the superiority of Islamic education to discourage Mijikenda from attending mission schools, the Arabs are said to have sent their own children to mission schools in secret(160).

There are other cliches, notably that concerning the presentation of Mombasa as a dangerous place. The stories of the dangers of enslavement in Mombasa, told in the nineteenth century to emphasise the ideological opposition of island and hinterland, have developed and are very prominent today in the historical presentation of Mijikenda. Arabs are accused of enticing Mijikenda onto boats with offers of goods or easy jobs(161), then taking them to sea on their boats so that they became disoriented:

> ..they were taken, they were put in a dhow, they said, 'they're going to Madzimare' [deep-water]. Well, it's there, up there near Lamu, they called Madzimare. They were turned round in the boats,

158. Int 22a, p.1.
159. Int 44a, 40b.
160. Int 22a.
161. Int 46a.

> brought here, you don't recognise the place where you were born, you just see the sea, going on and on, without beginning or end, well, you don't know your home(162)

It is a powerful metaphor for the way in which Mijikenda migrants to Mombasa became 'lost' and failed to return. Added to this historical tale of the dangers of Mombasa has been added a supernatural story - that of the mumiani. The mumiani are creatures who suck the blood of the living and turn them into zombies, who never return from the town(163). It is unclear when this tale became common, but certainly it was well-known by the 1930s. The chief mumiani of that time was said to be Muses Muhammed - the Kauma migrant turned Swahili, the ultimate 'lost' Mijikenda(164). The image is even more striking than that of the slaves on the boats. It was a warning to young men, but could have other uses; one Chonyi, his land mortgaged to Muses, organised a mob which expelled Muses' overseer from the mortgaged land, accusing him of being a mumiani(165).

These are the fundamentals of history as presented by the Mijikenda, then: that Mombasa island was originally theirs, but that it was taken from them by the Arabs; that Sere Ali and the British conspired to steal more land from the Mijikenda; and that Mombasa is a dangerous place, to linger in which invites enslavement or worse. In presenting this general history, informants frequently insist that the members of their fathers' generation never went to Mombasa(166), that Mijikenda women have never gone

162. Int 46a, p.6
163. Int 66a, 62a, 47a.
164. Int 47a.
165. Int 26c.

to Mombasa(167), and that they themselves have rarely been there.

This, at least, is the history presented in response to general questions about the origins of the Mijikenda and of Mombasa. There is, however, a curious dissonance between this and the personal and family histories of most of my informants: while general questions elicited these standard responses, personal histories revealed a complex pattern of relationships with Mombasans, of frequent movements to and from the island of Mombasa, of relatives who had moved to Mombasa and lived there. To a degree, the presentation of personal history is shaped by the cliches of general history. Informants often did not at first mention the periods of their life which they had spent in Mombasa - sometimes simply omitting periods of several years in their life stories(168). One informant, anxious to supply me with the general details of how Arabs dispossessed the Mijikenda with the help of the turncoat Swahili, went through considerably more than two hours of conversation before revealing that he himself had lived in Mombasa until he was thirty and had nearly become a Swahili(169). Another, who insisted that he had moved to Mombasa with ease because he was a Ribe and Mombasa really belongs to the Ribe, finally mentioned that in Mombasa he had lived with his Arab 'father' until the 'father's' death disrupted the arrangement(170).

This is not to imply that these informants were concealing the truth, or that by ingenious questioning I finally broke down their stories. There were occasions

166. See eg Int CHONYI/1, 47a, 4b.
167. See eg Int 21a.
168. Int 39a.
169. Int 5b.
170. See Interviews 20a, b and c.

when informants were deliberately evasive about their contacts with Mombasa, anxious to assert that they had never really been townspeople. During one interview, one of the listeners remarked that the informant had been a townsman, and the informant replied fiercely, 'I didn't stay there as if it were my home, I am a Chonyi, my home is right here [in the hinterland]'(171). Yet this was not usual. It is rather that in asking general questions about Mombasa and the Mijikenda I received general historical answers portraying this history as it is now perceived - and informants initially presented their own personal histories in ways which were consonant with this general history. Only when the focus had shifted from the general to the particular, often in the course of a second or third interview, was it possible for informants to introduce historical details which implied a contradiction with their presentation of general history. Oral history is a dynamic medium, and its dynamism rests on a certain inconsistency between performances - it is this dynamism which allows the idea of Singwaya to be variously employed in expressing the unity of the Mijikenda, or of Muslims, or of Kenyans, or of humanity(172). Yet oral history also demands a certain consistency within the single performance; so that informants might seek to present the details of their own or their parents' life in ways consistent with their presentation of Mijikenda origins and Mombasan origins.

Male Mijikenda migrants to Mombasa, then, began to organise themselves as Mijikenda for the first time in the 1920s, and the presentation of history which underpinned their identity as Mijikenda in the town was one increasingly antipathetic to the kind of incorporation

171. Int 26a, p.2
172. See Chapter 1, above.

which had previously characterised the position of Mijikenda in the town. Yet this new pattern of involvement did not embrace all Mijikenda in the town. Some men continued to become incorporated as Swahili, but even more so Mijikenda women continued to move to the town and stay there.

While they too were affected by the decline in the value of real wages, women were not involved in the daily struggle to find casual labour. Mombasa for them remained an attractive option into the 1930s, for it was almost impossible for them to do as young men did, and stay in Mombasa while keeping a place in the homestead. Only occasionally, in time of famine, could women go to Mombasa and remain part of the homestead economy(173). Women usually went to Mombasa to marry or to live as concubines with a succession of men, and in either case they were rejecting their identity as a part of the homestead, for their homestead heads would receive no bridewealth for them. For women fleeing marriages in the hinterland, Mombasa was the best option - if they returned to their original homestead, they would be unwelcome as the homestead head would be expected to repay the bridewealth he had received.

> Instead she runs to Changamwe and thence, having exchanged the marinda for the buibui to Mombasa. She is then the complete prostitute(174)

The elders on the LNCs repeatedly asked for government help in forcing the return of runaway wives(175). The

173. Int 54a; 45a.
174. Lambert, ADC Digo, Note, 30 May 1924, KNA DC KWL 3/5
175. Minutes, Malindi LNC, 12 June 1926; Minutes, Malindi LNC, 6 Feb 1927, KNA PC Coast 1/12/244

government always refused - apparently rather from an appreciation of the impossibility of the task than from an awareness of the value of these women's informal labour in the town(176). For whatever the attitude of homestead heads, women did not generally want to remain part of their homesteads and eventually return to them from Mombasa. For women it was not easy to simply invest the earnings of a period of life in Mombasa in the homestead, and then return to enjoy it. Young men could look forward to being elders, but women would still be women when they were old. They could rarely expect to control the use of property even when they had paid for it, and would still be expected to work. The increasing withdrawal of the labour of young men who went to town put an extra burden on women - which was, after all, why elders were so desperate to stop women from going to the town. Moreover, the planting of palm trees tended to increase the burden of agricultural labour. Since maize does not grow well among palms, the planting of palms along the ridge meant that homesteads had to start cultivating extra areas, off the ridge; Rabai, Chonyi and Jibana homesteads on the ridge, for example, established new plots either in the foothills nearer the coast or further inland, towards Jimba and Mwabaya Nyundo(177). This meant, quite simply, further to walk. The insecurities of old age in Mombasa were often more acceptable to women than they were to men, because the alternatives were worse.

The networks of Mijikenda in the towns that developed in the late 1920s intentionally excluded women - the town might be a place of temporary sojourn for the worker, but in order for the visits of Mijikenda men there to be

176. Minutes, Malindi LNC, 6 Feb 1927, KNA PC Coast 1/12/244.
177. Int 35a.

temporary, Mijikenda women, and therefore the locus of reproduction, had to be kept outside Mombasa. For women to go to Mombasa independently, either as concubines or as labourers, threatened agriculture and the bride-wealth system - for they would have every reason not to return to the hinterland or to give a Mijikenda husband control of their earnings. Nor did Mijikenda men usually wish to take their wives with them to work in Mombasa. Unless the wives were earning a labouring wage they would simply be an extra expense to the worker who would have to pay for their food, housing and water in the town, and if they were having to work as labourers the idea of leaving their husband and living as someone else's concubine would have been an attractive one: for a man, it was dangerous to bring a wife to Mombasa(178). In talking of the history of the Mijikenda and Mombasa, some informants deny that Mijikenda women ever went to Mombasa until the very recent past(179). In seeking informants in the hinterland who had been to Mombasa in their lives, I several times was told firmly that women would know nothing of Mombasa, since they had never gone there in the past. It seems clear that in saying that Mijikenda women never went to Mombasa, informants are implying that women never went and then returned, although many went, ceased to be Mijikenda and stayed in the town. No pattern developed of Mijikenda women going to the town but remaining within the homestead economy, since women's subordination within the homestead was not easily compatible with the opportunities for independence which Mombasa offered.

Some women did return to the hinterland after living as concubines in Mombasa, and returned on terms acceptable to themselves. One Giriama woman returned to her father's

178. Int 26b.
179. Int 21b.

homestead, repaid the bride-price her original Giriama husband had paid, and lived as the virtual head of the homestead, paying from her own accumulated wealth the bride-price for her younger brothers(180). A Digo Muslim woman, who possessed some wealth in coconut trees inherited according to Muslim law, returned to her home area and married a Digo husband after several years as a concubine in Mombasa(181). These women were unusual, however - the one in having managed to accumulate and keep control of considerable wealth, and the other in her possession of inherited wealth. More usually, women who had fled to Mombasa and had no permanent husband with a reliable income eked out a precarious income in old age as sellers of cooked food around the market(182). Some owned houses and lived off the rent from these in their old age(183). Women houseowners in Mombasa had the particular advantage that the authorities found it impossible to tax them. When the Supreme Court decided in 1935 that tax was the responsibility of a woman's husband, the DC of Mombasa noted with evident annoyance that

> ..the population in Mombasa is mainly Mohammedan with an appreciable number of unmarried women owning huts in their own right and living in a perpetual state of concubinage, but seldom with the same man for any length of time(184).

A number of elderly Mijikenda men also survived in the town in their old age by renting out the rooms of houses which they had built(185). The security this offered to

180. Int 34a.
181. Int 59a.
182. Int 24a; 5b.
183. Int 59a.
184. p.11, Mombasa District AR, 1935, KNA DC MSA 1/4.
185. Int 40a, 43a.

old men may have been less than that of the homestead, particularly in the period of the Town Planning Scheme, when houseowners faced eviction without compensation, but for a woman life as an independent house-owner was a not unattractive option. The dependence of these generally impoverished house-owners on the income from rents meant that they could not always act as patrons of new-comers. It was easier for Mijikenda than for others to find rooms in the houses owned by elderly Mijikenda who had elected to stay in the town as 'Swahili', but while in some cases they were housed free(186), they mostly stayed there as rent-paying tenants, not as family members(187).

Not all Mijikenda men who came to Mombasa after the mid-1920s came as temporary migrants. The networks of clientage and incorporation based on the town still existed and continued to function, though they were no longer the only or the best option available. In 1930 it was noted that

> Natives from neighbouring districts are usually in Mombasa in greatest numbers at about the time of Hut Tax Collection in their Reserves and they are constantly coming and going.
>
> A few of these become Mohammedans and remain as casual labourers but most of them return to their homes if and when when they consider they have made enough money(188)

186. Int 40a, p.6; 43b, p.4.
187. Compare with the above Int 40a, p.5; Int 43a, p.1. For the continuation of coastal dominance in this type of housing, and its use as an old-age pension, see p. 56 and p.69, 'Social and Economic Survey of Mombasa', 1947, PRO CO 533 545/4; also p.353, Wilson, 'African Housing in Mombasa', in Wilson (ed)'The Social Survey of Mombasa'.
188. p.6, 'Report on Native Affairs in Mombasa District', Dec 1930, KNA DC MSA 3/3.

The perceived importance of conversion to Islam as a way of breaking ties to the homestead and gaining access to networks in Mombasa was also mentioned by informants. When one informant was asked whether his parents had converted to Islam in the town before leaving, he replied, 'if they had converted, they would have stayed there'(189). A non-urban, non-Swahili Muslim identity only developed among the Digo - which may explain why many Mijikenda Muslims to the north of Mombasa, anxious to assert both their identity as Mijikenda and their religion as Islam, have adopted Digo identities(190). Insisting on their historical separation from Arabs and Swahili, some Digo insist that their Islam is original, that they migrated as Muslims from Medina to Singwaya(191).

There could still be advantages, certainly in the short term, to an involvement in the networks of Mombasa, rather than those of the Mijikenda in Mombasa. One Giriama, who had originally been employed with other Giriama as a building worker, mixing stones and cement, attached himself permamently to one of the contractors for whom he had worked as a labourer - an Arab(192). He converted to Islam, moved into the household of his new 'father', and moved from mixing cement to being the part-time supervisor of the squatters on his 'father's' various plantations; like the winch-men of Mbaraki(193), he found that being part of the town networks could give access to considerably less strenuous kinds of work.

189. Int 54a, p.7.
190. See Field notes, 10 July 1988, and Int 48a; also D Parkin, 'Being and Selfhood among Intermediary Swahili', in Maw and Parkin(eds), Swahili Language and Society, pp. 247-260.
191. Int 12a.
192. Int 54a.
193. See this chapter, above.

> Ah, I had no more kibarua, now I had become a boss! No more work. My job was being sent, to the plantations, he had many plantations, even here in Kanamai. I came and harvested the nuts, with the people, and the husks were taken off, they were broken for copra. I was the overseer.(194)

There are other examples. In the late 1930s, a Digo man graduated from being a cleaner and general dogsbody to being virtual manager of a small eating-house by attachment to its owner, an Arab, who paid the bride-price when his client married(195).

Individuals also managed to move between networks with some success. The Giriama who had become a plantation overseer abandoned his Arab 'father' after five years, in the later 1920s, and returned to his homestead, from where he made several journeys to Mombasa to work as a casual labourer at the docks(196).

The gang in which this man was employed on the docks was a Giriama gang - recruiting members as Giriama, and structured partly around a Giriama dance society. Workers in the gang saw themselves as migrants, and remitted earnings to their homesteads. The gang still, however, involved one link of patronage that was not based on Giriama ethnicity, and instead relied on the ties between the population of the town and the hinterland: it was in part created by, and found work through, a Beluchi serang, though it had its own Giriama serang. This Beluchi had

194. Int 54a, p.9.
195. Int 50a.
196. Int 54a.

married a Giriama wife from a homestead near Kanamai, apparently paying bridewealth and with the full consent of the woman's elders, and he used this relationship to encourage the creation of a gang of Giriama labourers, through the use of a Giriama dance society(197). These labourers were not incorporated clients, though - none converted to Islam or stayed in the town. The relationship seems to have resembled that by which some plantation owners around Mtwapa obtained labour during the 1920s and earlier. They relied on particular homestead heads, usually Giriama, to bring them groups of labourers who would settle temporarily for work and then leave(198). The link between all of the workers and their employer was an indirect one, through the homestead head, so that the network involved was essentially a Giriama one. It was through arrangements such as these, which relied on the essentially segmentary structure of hiring at the docks, that small groups of Mijikenda workers found their way into a dock-labour force that previously had been the preserve of the Swahili.

The development of these new networks did not make Mombasa an easier place to govern, or render its population more amenable to control. Since the majority of workers were still not housed or fed by employers, there remained in Mombasa a large number of water-carriers, wood-hawkers and food-sellers, unlicensed and unidentifiable, permanently resident on the island. Numbers of workers were now organising themselves along ethnic lines, and therefore were slightly more identifiable, but the renewed attempts to enforce the registration laws from 1927 onwards met with limited success. As casuals, workers could still find employment

197. ibid
198. Int 70a.

without registration certificates, and those who did register frequently used the expedient of 'temporary' registration in Mombasa, which gave them an opportunity to evade the law by concealing their actual identity(199). Mombasa could still be an effective refuge for deserters.

Attempts by officials to reduce what they saw as Mombasa's surplus population met with no more success. To balance these attempts with the employers' - particularly the ship-owners' - need for a sufficient supply of casual labour, new vagrancy rules were proposed in 1928, these to be accompanied by new casual labour rules, requiring registration and regular working(200). As with previous such schemes, the burden of implementing it would have fallen on the administration, not the employers,and this seems to have been enough to cause the scheme to be indefinitely postponed(201). In 1932, a brief campaign was launched using the existing vagrancy and registration laws to repatriate 'unemployed' Africans(202), but the scheme was abandoned, and the Mombasa Annual report for the next year noted, 'During the year 1933, the African police were instructed not to arrest people without registration certificates'(203).

Neither did the collection of tax in Mombasa improve dramatically. Those working in Mombasa as Mijikenda were more likely to be paying tax, at their homestead, than were those who had moved permanently to Mombasa, but tax evasion by all Africans on the island was still rife in

199. p.134, Native Affairs Dept Annual Report for 1929, Nairobi, 1930.
200. Commr for Local Govt - Chair, Msa District Cttee, 14 Feb 1928, KNA AG/4/1319.
201. ibid.
202. p.26, Mombasa District AR, 1933, KNA DC MSA 1/4.
203. p.27, ibid.

1930:

> ..[it is] obvious that there is a considerable evasion of Tax, in fact it is a common saying that Government does not require Tax from Up-country natives working on the Island(204)

Most of all, the new casuals still did not work regularly - coming to work as Mijikenda did not make them any less inclined to skip work occasionally(205), though it did reduce the alternative means of support in the town that allowed them to do this. In 1933, one third of the adult males in Mombasa District were 'unemployed'(206) - which in this context seems to mean not working daily for a wage. The DC called for a pass system to exclude them(207) - somewhat ironically, since their presence was a mark of the failure of the existing pass system.

These changes in the 1920s, provoked by the decline in the real value of wages and the redefinition of ethnicity in the town, tended to cheapen the reproduction of Mijikenda casual labourers. By making these changes, Mijikenda were able, despite the difficulties of the 1920s, to carry on working as casual labourers. Declining wages and rising rents did not drive them out of casual labour and into contract work on the plantations.

The European plantation companies had not been a great success. The rubber plantations had failed entirely

204. p.19, 'Report on Native Affairs in Mombasa', Dec 1930, KNA DC MSA 3/3.
205. Int 23a.
206. pp.12-13, Mombasa District AR, 1933, KNA DC MSA 1/4
207. ibid.

by 1920(208), and the East African Estates had, soon after receiving its enormous land grant, announced that it would function as a 'land development' company rather than actually planting(209). By 1916 East African Estates and the companies to which it let land had taken only around 2,000 acres under cultivation, much of it with coconut palms(210). Despite this, there was a continuing demand for labour for this company, and for the Sekoke and Powysland estates near Kilifi, and for some smaller planters near Mombasa. Sisal, in particular, proved a reliable earner. Though sisal prices fell steadily through the 1920s due to competition from Asian suppliers, demand for the product remained fairly strong(211). The Mijikenda still avoided this work, which officials still saw as the economic future of the coast.

> The Wanyika are still disinclined to work on the Coast Estates and the shortage of available labour continues to delay coastal development. Wanyika prefer going to Mombasa where wages, particularly at the harbour works, are high(212)

South of Mombasa, plantations found that Digo workers signed on for tickets and then disappeared after one or two days work, using the ticket system as a kind of casual employment(213). In 1923, the Supreme Court ruled that, if the worker was engaged for one ticket only, the employer

208. J Forbes Munro, 'British Rubber Companies in East Africa', JAH, XXIV, 1983, pp.369-79
209. EAS (D), 17 June 1912.
210. pp. 25-27, Vanga District Annual Report, 1915-16, KNA DC KWL 1/2.
211. N Westcott, 'The East African Sisal Industry 1929-49: the marketing of a colonial commodity during depression and war', JAH, XXV, 4, 1984, pp.445-461.
212. ADC Kilifi - SCC, 3 October 1925, KNA PC Coast 1/19/124.
213. p.4, Digo District AR, 1924, KNA DC KWL 1/10

could not compel their attendance and that this was, indeed, casual labour(214). The SCC put pressure on plantation-owners not to employ workers on such contracts, which the Mijikenda were using to avoid government forced labour:

> It is a common practice for natives residing in the vicinity of European plantations to apply for work thereon, obtain a work ticket to do two or three days work on it and then keep it as evidence that they are actively employed by a European when called on for District road work(215).

Mijikenda were not only still avoiding plantation work, but in avoiding it they could even use it to escape other forms of compulsion. In 1926 the DC Kilifi glumly remarked of the sisal plantations: 'It has proved impossible to interest the Wanyika in this kind of work'(216)

In keeping this freedom from the more unpleasant forms of work, and maintaining their independence from the state's desire to register, record, and control them, Mijikenda who went to work in Mombasa paid a price - the acceptance of a lower standard of living in the town and of a continuing degree of subordination within the homestead. The continued decline in the real wages for dock and other kinds of casual labour in the later 1920s, and the cuts in cash wages that followed in the 1930s, were made possible by the cheapened reproduction of the workforce. 'Straddling' between homestead and casual employment had

214. Supreme Court case 105/23, 13 Dec 1923, KNA AG/4/1640
215. SCC - Paton, Manager of Maunguja Estate, 21 March 1924, KNA PC Coast 1/9/52.
216. p.10, Kilifi Sub-district Annual Report, 1926, KNA DC KFI 1/2; see also Int 39a.

its advantages, but reliance on this was often an expedient forced by circumstance, and represented a reduction of the options open to Mijikenda men.

6. 'The drums are used for other dances'

The Mijikenda and the dance societies of Mombasa to c.1934

Access to work and housing in Mombasa came through membership of networks within the town: through contacts to a chain of other individuals who were willing to give access to these commodities. They did so sometimes in return for cash, sometimes in return for the recognition of a more enduring relationship and obligation, an obligation which might involve regular payments of cash or labour.

Such networks were not cast in terms of the fundamental needs towards the fulfilment of which they were directed. Rather, these networks had a 'content', to use Mitchell's term(1); that is, they were framed in terms of some institution of the society, an institution which gave them coherence and endurance, so that the networks built around them could be used again and again. At the simplest level, the smaller networks on which a migrant would rely for housing on first arrival in Mombasa were structured around the institution of kin: this was their content. The framework of kin could also function for Mijikenda incorporated in to Mombasan households, whose position within the household and the town, and their access to food and housing, came through a network structured around fictive kin. In these cases, Islam, and worship at the same mosque, generally provided a further institutional content for the networks of patrons and clients built up within the town.

Based on the enduring (though by no means unchanging) frameworks of real or fictive kin, networks could be

1. JC Mitchell, Social Networks..., Introduction

constructed: these networks were action-sets; groups existing temporarily in a particular purpose. They were temporary but could be recreated time and time again on the same basis and with the same members. In the casual labour market, these networks were constructed anew each day, and from one day to the next a casual worker might have found himself working with a number of different people, though for the same serang, since some might decide not to work one day, or might not be chosen by the serang. The network in this case was the group of workers working that day, and was different from one day to the next, while the institution upon which the network was based may have a far larger membership than did the network on any given day.

The institutions of kin and fictive kin were sufficient frameworks for small networks of a few people, even perhaps of a few dozen. Yet Mombasa's casual labour market came to involve the mobilisation of increasingly large numbers of labourers - particularly on the docks, where the labour force was numbered in the thousands by the later 1920s(2). This labour force was organised in an essentially segmentary way, so that the mobilisation of casual labour each day required the creation of a network that was itself a coming together of a number of smaller networks, a chain leading from each individual casual labourer through a number of intermediaries and finally to the major serangs who dominated the organisation of labour. This allowed the continuation of the casual system, under which the actual employers knew nothing of the names or the employment details of their workforce, and which relied therefore on the personal knowledge of a system of gang-leaders. The serangs, the gang-leaders,

2. Report of the Labour Commission of 1927, Nairobi, p.14

came to have subordinate gang-leaders, or tindals: the serangs knew the tindals and the tindals in turn knew and could pick out the workers. The institution of kin clearly was not in itself enough to support such extensive networks, and dock labour was instead organised around another framework - the dance societies of the town. Until the 1920s, the beni (also called the gwaride) were the only such societies.

In 1906, the East African Standard described the beni:

> At the head was a native gentleman clad in a gorgeous uniform of white and gold with epaulettes of wonderful fantasy. He carried a drawn sword of ancient but artistic workmanship. Immediately behind came a standard-bearer who kept in step with the music of a brass band, the noise of the drum and cymbals predominating. After the band came a number of Swahilis marching four abreast, each armed with a thick toy wooden gun or a discarded bayonet. Following this advanced guard came the Commandering [sic] chief, a tall Swahili of the house servant stamp. His uniform was beyond description but he wore a martial air, and his sword glistened in the light of many torches and Swahili taa's [lamps] gave a touch of realism to his person, for he was surrounded by swarthy men of the 'porter' class carrying spears... then came another brass band, which by the way played excellent music, followed by more Swahili, many hundreds, each and every keeping excellent step telling of the days when they had served apprenticeship in our East African 'askari' forces....at a moderate computation over two thousand natives march passed[sic] us.(3)

3. EAS (W), 14 April 1906.

Fifteen years later, another European described a similar procession:

> Dressed in whatever had come to hand, the native population of Mombasa passed us by...One squad wore Highland kilts and the tattered remains of tyrolean hats. Balaclava helmets were much in evidence. One group wore khaki trousers, with orange belts, and fur hats trimmed with peacock feathers..Some were gay in scarlet trunks and heavy fur pieces, others in white tennis rigs. A man covered from head to foot in deer skins walked on stilts twenty feet tall...(4)

The different beni societies were each divided into several regiments, and had an imposing hierarchy of officials with titles borrowed from the colonial state - governors, generals, captains, in one case a king and queen(5). As well as the musicians, who played drums and brass, there were a host of followers who marched behind the musicians, processing around the town and ending at Mwembe Tayari.

> Trumpets, they played trumpets. There were particular people, who played the trumpet, and others, they had their drums here [side-slung on the hip], and they beat them. They beat them, and they went along, going all round until they reached an open space, then they stood and played, then they went to another open space and played, we went all round the town, until the time came we were tired, at eleven or twelve o'clock, going home to sleep.

4. H.Norden, White and Black in East Africa, London 1924, p.47.
5. T Ranger, Dance and Society in East and Central Africa, London 1975, Introduction.

On Sunday night. On Monday you went to work.(6)

The weekly contests between the beni societies which occurred every Sunday in Mombasa for many years were dramatic spectacles which at times involved many, if not most, of the town's population. Historical writing has tended to see them as essentially rather wasteful and extravagant. Ranger sees them as a mirror for society, expressing the hierarchical structure of life in Mombasa in the early twentieth century and expressing some tensions that already existed within this society and others which were brought by colonial rule(7). The beni societies were essentially competitive, and their dances were contests between the different societies to put on the finest show. The different beni had different leaders, and some at least of these leaders evidently spent considerable amounts of money in providing uniforms and in helping pay for the vinyago(8) - the centrepieces of the procession, which were often spectacular models of battleships pulled on hand-carts on which the leaders of the society sat during the procession(9). Much wealth and energy was expended in this exercise, and Ranger has some sympathy for the conclusions of M'kangi, whom he reports as writing of the beni that

> while they danced the rest of the country was developing educationally and in agriculture. Beni has made the coast remain as the backwater of development(10)

6. Int 44a, p.8.
7. Ranger, Dance and Society, pp.18-19.
8. Int 53a, 55a.
9. Int 44b.
10. Ranger, Dance and Society, p.152.

This is clearly the presentation of the dance societies given to Mkangi by his Ribe informants - for it fits well with a historical presentation that blames the Arabs and Swahili for a perceived lack of economic development on the coast(11), and beni was, as the above descriptions make clear, very much an institution of the Swahili and of the town. The wastefulness of the beni is also a theme that found favour with officials in the 1920s and 1930s, who worked this into the more general theme of the moral decline of the Swahili and the need for action to be taken to distinguish the 'real' Swahili from the 'followers'(12).

Cooper alone has suggested that the beni had some significance and role beyond that of demonstrating how much wealth certain townspeople had to throw away. He notes that in the 1934 dock strike in Mombasa, workers were kept away partly through the same institution which had organised them to work in gangs - the beni societies(13).

Below the level of Governor, King and Queen, the hierarchical, segmented structure of the beni used a terminology borrowed from the colonial military: each society was divided into regiments, with companies within these regiments. One had four regiments: the East African Rifles, the Navy, the Airforce and the Crown(14). All these parts of the society had officers(15), so that there was a chain of separate units all brought together within a single structure. It was an institutional framework

11. See Chapter 5 above; also Int 20b.
12. See chapter 5, above; also p.1, Handing-Over Report, Dec 1931, KNA DC MSA 2/1.
13. Cooper, On the African Waterfront, pp.39-40, 44-45.
14. Int 12b.
15. Int 12b, 26c.

remarkably well suited to the organisation of the labour force, and the membership of the beni societies and of the casual labour force overlapped very largely; indeed, membership of the beni was almost essential to those wishing to work.

> Now the beni, that dance, then it was like work. The tindals had to be in it. They were in it, the beni, you see that's how the beni became strong, because people wanted to obey the serangi, then they'd get a job(16)

This function was in a sense a result of the way in which, as Ranger has pointed out, beni represented the hierarchies of Mombasan society(17). Ranger has considered the clients and followers of great men only as consumers of wealth, and suggests that the desire to attract such followers was simply a matter of pride: to have followers was a sign of social status. Undoubtedly this was true to some extent(18). Yet followers also had an economic value: in the nineteenth-century agricultural economy, the amount of land which a household could cultivate depended very much on the number of slaves and other dependants who worked for the household head. The development of the caravan system and other more local forms of wage labour in the second half of the nineteenth century gave patrons a chance to receive a direct cash return for the services of their clients - if they could control them - by sharing in the wages they earned from other employers(19). Hobley's description of the hiring of

16. Int 71b, p.3
17. Ranger, Dance and Society, p.18
18. Ranger, Dance and Society, p.18; also Int 5a
19. See Chapter 1, above.

caravan porters in the 1890s reveals how important the role of patrons was, and how already a kind of segmented hiring operated(20). The dance societies of the nineteenth century which preceded beni(21) were networks of patronage in this context, where patrons drew wealth from their clients as well as expending it upon them.

Ranger sees the development of beni from these earlier societies as essentially no more than a change in form under the new circumstances of colonial rule: whereas the earlier societies had used Arab-inspired dress and forms, the inspiration for the material culture of the new societies was a colonial and military one(22). The change was more than just one of form, however. There is no evidence that the earlier societies met with the regularity of, or had followings as large as, the beni. The increased regularity and size of the beni were very much products of its role within the changing labour market of Mombasa. Mobilising labour for the caravans or for occasional casual labour within the town required no regular organisation and control - but the mobilisation of hundreds, and then thousands, of workers for the harbour was a different matter. Caravan porterage required no continuing link between patron and client, for once they were signed on to the caravan porters were stuck with it. In caravan porterage, the patron (or slave-owner) shared in his clients earnings through one direct payment; when the porter received his advance of wages, the patron took a cut of it(23). Dock labour, by contrast, involved the daily mobilisation of labour, and the patrons' ability to

20. Hobley, Kenya, from Chartered Company to Crown Colony, pp. 197-8
21. Ranger, Dance and Society, pp.20-21.
22. ibid.
23. Admr - IBEA Sec, 22 March 1893, IBEA File 52(21); also see Director of Transport - SNA, 16 Aug 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/12/41

profit from clients' earning power depended on their ability to keep calling on the labour of clients, day after day; that is to construct networks each day. The institutional framework for this was larger and required regular reinforcement through weekly dances. The East African Standard's description of the membership of beni, with its references to their role in the casual and informal labour force of Mombasa, shows how closely interwoven were beni and the mobilisation of labour in 1906(24). It is this change, rather than the shift to physical forms drawn from the colonial environment, which really marks beni off from the dance societies of the nineteenth century.

Beni gave the officers of the society regular contact with potential workers; their position as officers within the beni gave them a hold over beni members so that they could require the members to work on the docks even when they did not want to:

> ..he thought, 'if I don't do this, I won't get people to take there, to work, on the ships. Because they didn't want to, people didn't want to work on the ships(25)

The 'lower-ranking' officers of the beni used it not only to create ties with their subordinates, but to place themselves in the segmented hiring structure of the labour force, giving them a link to the next highest officer/serang. Members of the beni paid no fees to join, but there were costs(26). While in some cases the costs of the uniforms and the vinyago were born by the leaders(27),

24. See the description above.
25. Int 53a, p.20.
26. Ag DC Msa - PC, 12 Aug 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/12/196.
27. Int 53a.

it was more usual for the members themselves to pay for their uniforms and to pay occasional subscriptions when necessary for the vinyago(28). Some officers of the beni developed a new kind of debt patronage - loaning money to members to pay for their uniforms, they claimed this money back over time, giving them a further hold over the members of the society(29). The amounts involved were not large - a few shillings at a time - but if uniforms were changed fairly regularly officers would have an almost continuous claim on the followers' wages. The officers needed to take no direct earnings from beni, anyway. They were recompensed for the time and money spent on it by the payments they received from employers for turning the gangs out to work, and by their ability to make other demands on the earnings of their dependants.

Members of the beni found, through their membership, an access to the serangs which they needed. Although they did not want to work regularly or often, the high wages that dock work offered for the occasional day's labour were attractive. Through the beni, they could have the personal acquaintanceship with a tindal or serang which was essential if they were ever going to be picked out from the group of hopefuls waiting for work:

> Without that [knowing the serang] it's not possible. You have to know them. Could you and get something from someone you don't know?(30)

In this, beni was particularly important for those newly arrived to the town, who generally had no other ties to serangs, and so no other framework around which to

28. Int 67a, 55a, 61a.
29. Int 55a.
30. Int 20c, p.7.

construct a network which led them into work. Some who had become well established in Mombasa and knew people in other ways, found work on the docks without being members of beni, but this was not the usual pattern(31). Beni was also, of course, a great deal of fun to participate in - it 'cheered up the town'(32), as one ex-member put it. All informants who remembered it, even those who disapproved of it, remember vividly the spectacle and the excitement that surrounded the processions every Sunday. It was also a mockery of the ceremonials of the colonial state. A story (almost certainly apocryphal) is still told of how one Governor, on a visit to Mombasa, was so overcome by the spectacle that he forgot himself and stood to salute the officers of the beni as they passed on their 'battleship'. Some officials seem to have been keenly aware of the mocking edge that the beni possessed. In 1906, after the Collector noted that the beni was 'most undesirable as tending to bring into disrepute many kinds of uniform'(33), legislation was passed 'prohibiting the promiscuous wearing of naval, military or police uniforms by those not entitled to the same'(34).

Beni allowed migrants to Mombasa to build new networks, and so to find work, and in doing so it signalled that they had become townspeople; it was very much a dance of the town. Ranger described the membership of the societies as the 'young Swahili free men'(35), and in a sense to dance the beni was to be a 'Swahili' in the widest sense. Beni members had very heterogeneous origins; they were not

31. Int 71a and b.
32. Int 26a, p.3
33. Collector, Msa - Ag Sub-Commr, 18 May 1906, KNA PC Coast 1/1/113
34. EAS (W), 7 July 1906; see Uniforms Ordinance, No. 14 of 1906, in Crown Advocate - HM Comm, 12 June 1906, PRO CO 533 16
35. Ranger, Dance and Society, pp. 32-33

drawn from any one ethnic group(36), but all those who danced were townspeople, and had become wastaarabu, 'civilised' (as Digo informants anxious to avoid the term 'Swahili' now put it):

> Well, those who were here and stayed a long time, they became civilised, those dances were danced, by the civilised ones(37)

Membership of the beni was associated with being placed and known in a town culture where people were known and looked after by others in the town. When asked how he had chosen which of the beni to join, an informant replied:

> I knew people who danced - we knew the dances. "I'll dance such and such a dance. Will you dance that dance?" "Alright, I'll dance such-and-such." Each person to the dance he wanted. It was like that, a calm town, peaceful. You know me, if you don't see me for a day or two, you'll look for me, where's so -and-so?'. Oh, he's ill, at home' You'll come and visit me(38)

The beni were not mutual support societies in manner of some other dance societies in colonial Africa; there was no central fund from which ill or aged members were supported or funeral expenses paid. Beni was rather one of a number of institutions around which such networks of support could be built, and members of beni societies had other means of support in the town, generally through networks established around fictive or real kin.

36. Int 43a, 55a.
37. Int 9b, p.2; also Int 12b.
38. Int 55a, p.4

In being part of these institutions, Mijikenda who moved to the town and danced beni were abandoning their place in the rural homestead. One informant, who spoke of his membership of the beni, inspired the comment 'you danced beni, you were a real townsman'(39) from a listener, and a Ribe man, anxious to emphasise that he had remitted wages to his father and recognised his obligations to the homestead, remarked:

> I never danced..if I got civilised there, well, I'd discard my parents, I'd just discard them...if you dance, then no question, they'll draw you in to that gang(40)

Practically, being a beni member cut a migrant off from his homestead. On Sundays, rather than walking home to the homestead, Mijikenda members of the beni were dancing. The costs of the uniforms for the beni, as well as the occasional imposts of the serangs, reduced the chances of remitting wages to the homestead, even if there was any desire to. Even more so, the social life and contacts which beni offered in the culture of the town drew migrants into spending their time and money with townspeople, not thinking of the homestead.

> That was what we did, we didn't think of buying a or of building a house, just soap to wash our clothes and going out on a Sunday, going to dance(41)

Culturally, the beni were definitely dances of the town. Not only were the clothes and the spectacular models drawn from the environment of the colonial town, but the

39. Int 26a, p.2.
40. Int 40a, p.9.
41. Int 55a, p.1.

songs, when they had words, were sung in Swahili, and the music was European in inspiration(42), drawn from military marching bands(43) and the bands that played on the decks of visiting steamers(44). They were not explicitly Islamic societies, but almost all of the members were Muslims, as part of being townspeople, and one informant said that the beni celebrated the end of Ramadhan with a feast(45). All these things placed the beni in sharp contrast to dances which Mijikenda or other migrants might have danced before coming to the town, as one Digo, living now in the hinterland, recalled:

> The beni, beni dance European dances...the Digo dances are one thing and these another. When I went, I lived in the town, I plunged into the town, Mombasa. In Mombasa, we danced those dances, here the dances are different(46)

Thus the beni were polyethnic, and at the same time were exclusively Swahili, expressing well the extreme ease with which people could become Swahili in Mombasa. The membership of beni also demonstrates how Mijikenda had easier access to the identity and institutions of the town than did up-country Africans. Luo, Kikuyu and others were not excluded from the societies, but since members were usually introduced to the institution of beni through networks built around other institutions - often through relatives - Mijikenda who had more kin in the town found it easier to become involved in the beni, and up-country membership of beni remained

42. Int 44a.
43. Ranger, Dance and Society, p.21.
44. Int 12b.
45. Int 26a.
46. Int 9b, pp.1-2.

limited, as did up-country participation in the casual labour force. In 1919 the DC said of the beni 'There are no conditions or restrictions of membership, but there are practically no up-country natives in the societies'(47).

Inevitably, the beni have become caught up in the reappraisal of, and the new presentation of, the history of Mijikenda and Mombasa. In the modern historical presentation of the Mijikenda, not only are beni societies presented as another way in which the Swahili and Arabs impeded the coast's economic development(48), but they have also become vividly associated with the cliches of Mombasans as slavers, who forced Mijikenda to become 'lost':

[30]They used to capture them and take them to sell, no-one knows where - they had their houses, I don't know - theyhad a dance. If someone was captured they cried out, and they played the dance. So that the cries wouldn't be heard...

[21]Yes, they made a noise, they played a dance...they call it gwaride(49)

Ranger suggests that the first beni society was the Kingi, created sometime in the 1890s by a Baluchi named Hamis Mustapha(50). By 1906, there were two, the Kingi and the Kilungu, Kilungu having been started by an Arab called Sheikh Nasor(51). By 1912 these had been joined by

47. DC Msa - Ag PC, 1 Dec 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/12/196.
48. Int 20b
49. Int 21b, pp.7-8, informants 30 and 21 speaking.
50. Ranger, Dance and Society, p.20.
51. ibid, p.24.

the Scotchi, headed by King Rastam(52); Rastam bin Talasam, who was a member of the Basheikh clan. This was a clan claiming origins in Arabia and in the Swahili Three Tribes (53). Rastam was initially involved in mobilising workers for the docks(54), but later moved to Nairobi where he worked as a chef for a European(55). His visits to Mombasa continued to be lavish spectacles, however, and he bore much of the cost of these extravaganzas, selling houses and land to finance them(56). Some of the officers of the society beneath him continued to be involved as serangs in the dock labour force - different informants connected Ropa, one on Rastam's lieutenants in the Scotchi, with both the organisation of the fishermen of Mombasa's old port(57) and with casual labourers at Kilindini(58).

Clearly, the beni societies were at first led by townspeople of considerable status, who enhanced their status through leading these societies as well as deriving some return from them. The great drum of the Scotchi, which Rastam beat to announce the start of the procession, was said to have been beaten to call the townspeople of Mombasa to arms against the Portuguese in the seventeenth century(59); a story which links the beni firmly into the history of the long-established Swahili of Mombasa. Yet this association with the upper classes of Swahili society did not endure, as Ranger has noted(60). The importance of

52. ibid; also EAS (D) 18 Jan 1912; also Int 5a
53. Int 5a; compare this with M Strobel, 'Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1895-1970', PhD thesis, UCLA 1975, p.220.
54. Int 53a.
55. Int 67a.
56. Int 71b, 67a.
57. Int 67a
58. Int 26b
59. Field notes, 1 April 1988.
60. Ranger, Dance and Society, pp. 85-9; Strobel, 'Muslim women..', p.217.

patronage through dock labour, rather than of patronage based on previous forms of wealth such as land, allowed new leaders and new societies to develop. By 1930, there were four beni societies dancing in Mombasa, each with hundreds of followers(61). It was no longer a matter of established, already wealthy patrons organising their clients to work in dock labour; new patrons arose whose status rested solely on their role as serangs in the dock labour force, who built up their position through themselves working on the docks. Salim bin Ali, the migrant of Chonyi origins who founded the Sadla society was one such man. By the 1920s, the shorehandlers and stevedores of Mombasa were largely organised through two separate and competing beni societies - Salim bin Ali's Sadla being on one side and the Scotchi on the other(62). The beni came to be particularly associated with Swahili of lower status, and came to be condemned by those Arabs and Swahili who saw their own position and their culture being threatened by the ease with which others could assume a Swahili identity - an ease dramatically represented by the permeability of such institutions as the beni.

The redefinition of the term Swahili in the 1920s that centred around attempts to limit the membership of the Twelve Tribes affected beni considerably(63). The older men who headed the clans of the Twelve Tribes denounced the beni as the most dramatic sign of the decline into decadence of Swahili youth(64): what officials were fond of calling the 'demoralisation' of the Swahili. The dispute between young and old was conflated with that over

61. Int 44a
62. Int 12b, 71b
63. See chapter 5, above.
64. Int 71b.

the boundaries of ethnicity: concern over the demoralisation of the young mixed with anxiety over the threat to the status of the Twelve Tribes presented by the presence of large numbers of recent immigrants in the beni(65). Just as some Mijikenda elders denounced the beni for leading their young men astray, so the Swahili elders thought that it was corrupting Swahili youth.

> We beg to acquaint you, sir, with the various illicities and illegalities that are obtained and performed during Sunday bands, not only from players, but from those who as already mentioned in para.1, viz. drinkers. We therefore beg to protest that bands should not be allowed to play for pleasure except on wedding ceremonies(66)

It is significant that this opposition came from the established Arab and Swahili families, for it was they who felt that not only was their status threatened by the new Swahili of Mombasa, but who found that their position as patrons was being undermined by the rise of new patrons like Salim bin Ali, and so sought to restrict the beni to their role as wedding bands within the Swahili culture of the Twelve Tribes. It was a sign of their awareness that they had lost control of the economy of Mombasa, as well as of their ethnicity. The tirades against the beni in the petitions to the Governor of the 1920s were followed by further denunciations in Al-Islah, the newsletter produced by Sheikh Al-Amin Mazrui in 1931-2. For Sheikh Al-Amin, the concern over the declining economic position of the old elite was magnified by a sense that they had lost their leadership of the Islamic community to new

65. Strobel, 'Muslim women..', p.233.
66. Petition to the Governor published in the EAS (D), 22 June 1927.

challengers of humbler origins, some of whom praised the beni(67).

Calls to ban the beni societies were by no means unwelcome to the authorities. The beni encapsulated many of the perceived problems of the 'Swahili', but there were even more powerful reasons for it to be unpopular with officials. Mombasa was not, until the 1930s, a town noted for open or violent discontent(68). More subtle forms of resistance to the pressures of colonial rule existed. Officials accused the people of Mombasa of being idle and dishonest, but with the exception of one violent outbreak in 1922(69), the town was remarkably calm. Such calmness (which Hobley attributed to the enervating climate(70)) was, indeed, a sign of how many alternatives were available to those who went to live in Mombasa, and how easily they could avoid direct confrontations. The beni societies, however, inspired officials with trepidation from as early as 1904, for they threatened an exception to this. As societies which drew large numbers of people together, outside the control of officials or any other Europeans, they were perceived by some as a threat to authority; for they were the most visible manifestation of the ability of the people of Mombasa to organise themselves outside the structures of the state.

In Mombasa, the police were not noted for their willingness to interfere; unable to effectively enforce tax, contract, registration and other laws, they were

67. Salim, Swahili-Speaking Peoples, pp.162-165; Int 71b; R Pouwels, 'Sheikh Al-Amin b. Ali Mazrui and Islamic Modernism in East Africa, 1875-1947', International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, XIII, 1981, p.337.
68. CW Hobley, Kenya, from Chartered Company.., p.147-8.
69. p.2, Msa District AR, 1923, KNA DC MSA 1/3
70. Hobley, Kenya, From Chartered Company, p. 148

apparently happy not to try too hard. The 1912 confrontation with the boat-men showed how unrewarding such direct intervention could be(71). Yet the perceived threat to public order posed by the beni societies seems to have led the police to make an exception to this generally relaxed approach, however; the first mention of beni in official files came as a result of police attempts to break up a beni procession in 1904(72). In 1906, following another fight between police and beni members(73), the police were instrumental in encouraging the Collector to ban processions outright on the grounds that they were a threat to public order.

> There is no objection to these bands, but a disorderly crowd of dressed-up Swahilis has been in the habit of congregating and forming a procession with the band. This would in time have led to a disturbance and it was therefore decided best to stop the bands and the processions would then stop(74).

The Collector offered terms to the beni societies: they could play if no procession took place and the competing societies played in separate areas(75). Since competition and mass membership were the essence of the beni, these terms were rejected(76). The ban endured for at least a year(77), but then seems to have lapsed, for by 1911 the

71. See Chapter 3, above.
72. Nasor bin Muhammed - Sub Commr, 11 July 1904, KNA PC Coast 1/1/60.
73. EAS (W) 20 Jan 1906.
74. Msa Collector's Intelligence Diary, 13 June 1906, KNA PC Coast 1/17/33.
75. Msa Collector's Intelligence Diary, 12 July 1906, KNA PC Coast 1/17/33.
76. ibid.
77. JM Moosa - Msa Collector, 24 Feb 1907, KNA PC Coast 1/12/41.

beni were dancing again, bigger and more disorderly. Christmas 1911 saw a particularly vigorous competitive display that ended in a major fight:

> ..the skirmishing commencing on Christmas Eve [a Sunday] and lasting over nearly three days. At one time it was estimated that over two thousand natives were engaged in the fighting and the police had the greatest difficulty in suppressing the disorder(78).

A few months later, the East African Standard was calling for a ban on the beni, in an article the language of which clearly expressed the extent of European frustration at the administration's inability to control the life and commerce of Mombasa,

> On nearly every Sunday afternoon and evening the peace of Mombasa is broken by the riotous music dispensed at the native ngoma by the rival bands of the village factions...it cannot be accounted right that the business of the Bazaar should be allowed to go forward ceaselessly seven days in the week or that the blatant ngoma should be tolerated at the sweet will of the Swahili(79)

No ban was imposed, however. The fear of beni was a fear of its potential, and the freedom from state control it represented, rather than a response to any actual activities. There is no evidence of looting or real rioting during the 1912 disturbances, and while a number of the dancers were hospitalised, none were killed(80).

78. EAS (D), 18 Jan 1912
79. EAS (W), 20 July 1912
80. EAS (D), 18 Jan 1912

This was, as one observer was told in 1906, just a dance(81) - in stark contrast to the days of rioting that left eighteen dead in Mombasa in 1937, for example(82). Moreover, the beni societies were most demonstrative in their affirmations of loyalty to the British Crown, singing songs in praise of King George during the First World War(83).

Nevertheless, some still saw the beni as a danger. When an alarmed officer of the King's African Rifles sought further information on the beni in 1919, he was much alarmed by the lack of any ethnic exclusivity in the societies.

> The fact that the movement is not confined to any one tribe seems to me to constitute a possible future danger for in the event of a personality or personalities ever attempting to organise Pan Ethiopianism in Central East Africa they should be likely to find in this society machinery ready prepared(84)

Replying to these enquiries, Ainsworth-Dickson, Acting DC of Mombasa, stoutly refuted all such imputations of danger and disloyalty on the part of the beni, and revealed that he had come to his own arrangement with them:

> The certain degree of obedience and discipline and the 'esprit de corps' which is engendered are of value, and personally I regard these societies

81. EAS (W), 20 Jan 1906
82. DC Msa - PC, 13 Sept 1937, PRO CO 533 486/16
83. Ag DC Msa - PC, 1 Dec 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/12/196.
84. Major Muggeridge - Commissioner of Police, 29 July 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/12/196.

> with favour and am in close touch with them all, having found them on more than one occasion of use in administrative work(85)

The beni survived, and more particularly the heads of the beni achieved and maintained their positions, by accepting a degree of cooption by the state. More important and more enduring in the growth and persistence of the beni was, however, their arrangement with the dock employers.

The usefulness of the casual labour system to the dock employers has already been noted. Through the dock reorganisations of 1921 and 1927, this did not change; the same system of serangs continued under the Kenya Landing and Shipping Company from 1927(86). The employers' realisation of beni's role was apparently very clear: after the previous head serangi of the shorehandlers was dismissed, Salim bin Ali, the head of Sadla, was elevated to the position of chief serangi on company instructions, backed up by threats to arrest him if he did not comply(87). One informant even suggested that the company deducted from the wages of casual labourers the amounts owed to Salim bin Ali for beni uniforms(90). As the labour force on the docks grew, the need for the effective organising power of the dance societies had increased, and the accommodation reached by beni leaders with the dock employers proved more enduring than that with the administration.

The enthusiasm expressed by Ainsworth-Dickson as Acting

85. Ag DC Msa - PC, 12 Aug 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/12/196.
86. Int 71b
87. Int 71b
88. Int 26b

DC in 1919 was not shared by his successors in the later 1920s. Beni was seen both as a symptom of the demoralisation of the Swahili and as an unwelcome manifestation of how uncontrolled Mombasa still was. Officials did not immediately respond to the calls from Swahili elders for beni to be banned in the mid-1920s, but in 1931 the DC noted that

> The Sunday ngomas are still considered by many to be one cause of excessive drinking and other extravagances among the people and it is suggested that they be permitted twice a month only(89).

The DC suggested that sports should be promoted as an alternative attraction(90) - which would of course be under European control. In 1932 when Sheikh Al-Amin was denouncing the beni, and at a time when there was considerable official hostility to the number of 'unemployed' Africans on the island(91), severe restrictions were placed on the beni. The number of bandsmen was limited to fifteen, and procession outside the locations of the town was banned, as was any change of uniform without permission. Ranger suggests that the 1932 restrictions were imposed by the Municipality, but this does not seem to have been the case; it was the police who imposed this ban, for the employers who were represented on the Municipal Board had yet to turn against the beni(92).

89. p.1, Handing-Over report, Msa District, Dec 1931, KNA DC MSA 2/1.
90. ibid.
91. See the remarks in p.14, 'Report on Native Affairs in Mombasa', Dec 1930, KNA DC MSA 3/3; also pp.12-13, Msa District AR 1933, KNA DC MSA 1/4.
92. Ranger, Dance and Society, p.88; Strobel, 'Muslim Women..', p.231

In 1934 even more stringent restrictions were imposed, through permanent Municipal Bye-Laws, after the accommodation between the beni societies and the employers was called dramatically into question. The dock strike of 1934 was the first organised strike over wages to affect the docks at Mombasa, and in itself demonstrates the transition that had taken place during the 1920s. Before then, some serangs had been accused of holding back the labour of their gangs to gain higher wages(93), but there was no sign that they had needed to stop others from working in order to enforce their demands for higher wages. Serangs and gang members were all able to fall back on other forms of support and sources of income, and the general ability to avoid work on conditions that were not considered acceptable meant that there was no rush to take the places of those who chose not to work. There was no effective economic pressure to scab, and so no need for the structured solidarity of a strike. By 1934, though, the situation had changed: the steady erosion of wages since 1921-2 had made it clear that workers and serangs could not force wages up by irregular working and piecemeal stay-aways(94). Reductions in the daily cash-wage for stevedores quickly led to a partially successful strike by all workers, some of whom had already taken wage-cuts(95).

The beni societies, so valued for their role in mobilising casual labourers to work, proved equally effectual in mobilising them to strike(96). The already hostile attitude of officials fused with the anger of the

93. PC - Chief Sec, 9 Feb 1917, KNA PC Coast 1/9/42.
94. See chapter 5, above.
95. Clayton and Savage, Government and Labour, p.221; Cooper, On the African Waterfront, pp. 42-43.
96. Cooper, On the African Waterfront, pp.44-45.

dock employers, and in the aftermath of the strike, the Municipal Board, which was largely made up of officials and major employers, banned the beni from processing in the Municipality without special permission from the DC(97). However, this ban was not the only challenge that the beni faced by this time. The population of Mombasa had already begun to dance new dances.

The new style of dance societies first appeared in the later 1920s(98), and they were dramatically different to the previous societies. One informant stated this simply when, in talking of the beni, he said, 'there was not just one dance in Mombasa, there were, umm, African dances too'(99). In organising casual workers, the beni had stressed their status as townspeople; indeed they had required of casuals that they be townspeople. In contrast, the new societies were based around an identity outside the town; they were explicitly ethnic, and those who danced them emphasised their membership of ethnic groups which were essentially not of the town. Though there were dances of Tanzanian migrants(100), most of these new societies were Mijikenda in membership - and like the beni, they were intimately associated with the position of their members in the casual labour market of Mombasa. The new type of labour networks, through which Mijikenda found work as Mijikenda within the town, relied on personal contacts just as the previous ones had done. Workers remained nameless and unknown to their employers, and still organised themselves, and the new dances provided the institutions through which these networks could be built each day. Like the beni leaders, the

97. Ranger, Dance and Society, p.88
98. Int 34a.
99. Int 44a, p.8
100. Int 56a

leaders of the new societies became noted serangs(101). One informant described how Kenga wa Mwana, a leader of the namba society, met Giriama seeking work at the Sunday dance:

> This dance drew people from far away, they came from Vitengeni, from who knows where! When they got there, "Ah, we've come to look for work.."How many of you are there?" "There are six of us" "Alright! Tomorrow, come to Kenya [Landing and Shipping Co]" - the next day he'll see a long line of people, queueing(102)

Migrants found that to get work, they had to know the serangs - and the best way to know the serangs was to dance with them, as one Giriama said of his experience with the namba

> Even when I was in Mombasa, when I was working at Kilindini, well, you couldn't get in there unless you could sing in a dance! Do you see? Well, I was a real singer, me. I never failed to get work at Kilindini!(103)

They were dances that had already existed outside the town. In the hinterland, they seem to have had a role in organising local loyalties within the group. One Digo informant described a dispute between his father and some of his neighbours in terms of membership of different Digo dance societies, kayamba and sengenya and gonda(104). In Mombasa, there were fewer dances, and each seems to have been associated with one of the Mijikenda groups: rather

101. Int 73a.
102. Int 34a, p.4.
103. Int 54a, p.11.
104. Int 9c, 9d.

than being expressive of smaller loyalties within that group. The namba was a Giriama dance, the mavunye was a Chonyi dance, kayamba was a Duruma dance (not to be confused with a spirit dance of the same name), and the sengenya a Digo dance(105). These ethnic associations were not absolute - the namba, in particular, was danced by various Jibana, Kauma, and Kambe as well as Giriama(106), but it was recognised as a Giriama dance. Almost all those who danced were Mijikenda, however; the long history of intermarriage made it easy for a Kauma, for example, to join the namba through a Giriama relative(107). This previous existence outside the town, and the form of these societies, set them off sharply from the beni. These dances were danced to drums alone, and the songs of the dancers were sung in Mijikenda languages(108) - not in the Swahili heavily laced with English loan words that characterised the beni songs. Where the beni members had dressed in military uniforms and other clothes drawn from the styles of the colonial town, the namba and other dancers wore a very different style of clothes:

> I used to wear a shuka [single cloth], you just dance in a shuka. A shuka, then you have beads, you oil yourself, comb your hair, and put the beads on. Then, just like that, your chest bare(109).

The new dances served to emphasise the identity of the dancers outside the town, and regularly reinforced their membership of hinterland groups. They were in this far more similar to the kalela dance groups of the Copperbelt than they were to the beni which preceded them in

105. Int 22a, 23a.
106. Int 30a.
107. Int 45a.
108. Int 21b, 54a.
109. Int 21b, p.17 - informant 30 talking

Mombasa(110).

They were, as such, mechanisms which sought to prevent the workers whom they organised from becoming 'lost'(111). Even the words of the songs emphasised the importance of not becoming 'lost'; while many of the songs maintained the competitive, boasting element that had been dominant in beni(112), at least one namba song urged the young migrant in town not to spend his time smoking cigarettes and forgetting the needs of his family at home(113). The namba and other dances were low-budget affairs compared to the beni, required none of the spending on uniforms and vinyago that pulled beni members into debt.

There was another, even more striking, distinction between the beni and the namba and other dances. The beni had few women members, though there were apparently some female patrons(114), and one man suggested that a powerful motive for joining the beni was the chance of obtaining the sexual favours of women associated with the dance(115). Despite this small female membership in the beni itself, there were women's dance organisations in Mombasa some of which seem to have operated in parallel to certain of the beni societies(116). These women's societies, the lelemama, were like the beni very much institutions of the town, of a Swahili culture that drew on elements of slave culture and incorporated them into

110. JC Mitchell, The Kalela Dance: aspects of social relationships among urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia, Manchester, 1956
111. Int 34a.
112. Int 73a.
113. Int 21b, p.17.
114. Ag DC Mombasa - PC, 12 Aug 1919, KNA PC Coast 1/12/196
115. Int 58a
116. Ranger, Dance and Society, pp. 167-9

the culture of the town(117) (just as the beni seems to have derived the vinyago from the culture of ex-slaves). As with the beni, belonging to the lelemama signified membership of the community of the town(118).They were not connected with the mobilisation of casual labour on the docks, but they did provide a structure for other networks upon which women in Mombasa relied. When, at pubescence, a young woman of Digo origins was transferred from the household of the mother who had raised her (not her natural mother) to that of a woman who took her into her household as a junior member, it was a move that came about through both women's membership of a lelemama(119).

The new men's dances had no parallel female organisations. Where women danced, they did so within the organisations of the men, and they came to the town on a Sunday specifically to do so(120); they were not living in the town, and there are no signs that these new dances ever had any of the organising roles for women that they did for men. The new dances were part of an ideology that emphasised women's place in the rural homestead, as farmers, and condemned as lazy those who did come to the town to live for any time.

The beni societies did not disappear when they were banned. Like the new societies, they survived the ban, either by dancing with permission from the DC(121), or simply by ignoring the restrictions. At least one of the new dances moved to Kisauni, on the north mainland, where they seem to have been able to continue their activities undisturbed though they were in theory still within the

117. M Strobel, 'Muslim women..', pp.216-36
118. ibid., p.229
119. Int 74a.
120. Int 34a.
121. Int 21a.

Municipal boundaries(122). The beni, however, steadily lost their organising role within dock labour. Salim bin Ali remained a serang until the 1950s(123), but by the time he was fired, in the major reorganisation of that time, the beni had no more significance in casual labour(124). While some apparently still found work through them, the beni societies had shrunk dramatically in size by the 1940s, really being no more than the actual musicians themselves, and they lived by playing for payment at weddings and other events(125) - rather as the one remaining, tiny, gwaride still does today. The Scotchi, at least, had lost its significance as a town dance by around 1950, when several of the members were Jibana migrants temporarily in the town(126). As one ex-member of the Sadla mournfully put it: 'That was its time, but things change. No longer is the trumpet in the mouth, and the drums are used for other dances'(127)

The women's dance societies of the town survived longer - unchallenged by the rise of new female dance societies, or by any change in women's definition of their ethnicity within Mombasa, they remained strong until the 1950s(128). The newer dances, which seem to have been smaller and less obtrusive, less threatening to the colonial mind than were the mass displays of the beni, endured until the end of colonial rule. With the coming of independence they disappeared from Mombasa in the face of considerable hostility from officials of the new administration, who saw them as obstacles to progress(129).

122. Int 30a.
123. Int 26a, 26b.
124. Int 71b, 67a.
125. Ranger, Dance and Society, p.152
126. Int 21a.
127. Int 26a, p.3
128. Strobel, 'Muslim women..', pp.235-7; Int 74a.
129. Int 73a.

The dance societies were not the only such institutional bases around which networks could be built, though they were the largest and most visible and were so well suited to the organisation of a large labour force. Among the women of Mombasa, spirit possession societies seem to have played a similar role. One Digo woman was supported through networks based on these societies whenever her income from concubinage failed(130). When the football teams for which the administration had such enthusiasm were organised(131), some of these too became the basis of other labour networks. The head of one of these football teams controlled the hiring of market-sweepers for the Council, and was clearly able to exploit his position:

> There were some people, they had no work, if somebody wanted to join the club, he goes to the chief, 'I want work'. He'll be told, 'There's work, football, for the Council', then he'll be told the conditions of joining the club, if he can manage them, he'll join(132)

Much of Mombasa's labour force continued to be casual and informal, organised not by employers or the state but by other workers who were able to use their knowledge in the town, and their experience of work, to improve their own positions by acting as labour agents and foremen; and so the eclipse of the beni led to the rise of other institutions through which their control and influence could be structured.

130. Int 59a.
131. p.29, 'Report on Native Affairs in Mombasa', Dec 1930, KNA DC MSA 3/3.
132. Int 26a, p.3

Conclusion

The history of the dance societies of Mombasa in a sense contains within it the history of the changing place of the Mijikenda in the life of Mombasa; and in this it expresses many of the changes through which Mombasa itself went in the first four decades of British rule. The occupation of town space and rural space acquired a new significance. In the nineteenth century, space had, to an extent, identified ethnicity; despite considerable movements of population from hinterland to island those who lived in Mombasa were Swahili, and those who lived in the hinterland were Wanyika. Within this system, ethnicity was not a question of parentage or origin but of residence.

By contrast, the vision of the colonial administration was one of an Africa peopled by distinct and fairly fixed ethnic groups with their own separate and traditionally fixed forms of government, who could be ruled through their rulers and identified through their ethnic groups, and none of whom were fitted to the complexities of long-term urban residence. Urban space was essentially European space, and the desire of the colonial administration to control urban space was fused with their suspicion of urban Africans and their perception that their labour problems on the coast were a result of the influence of the Swahili and Arabs, and of the ease with which Mijikenda and others could move to Mombasa and become part of an urban culture which was regarded as workshy and dishonest. Alarmed by their vision of an idle, growing, uncontrolled and permanent urban population, officials sought to end the influence of Swahili and Arabs on the coast population. From the later 1920s, while some continued to move permanently to the town, Mijikenda and other Africans came to live in Mombasa but kept their

identity from outside the town; place of birth and parentage, rather than residence, came to define ethnicity, and the culture of the town became heterogeneous. Previously life in the town had blended cultures: a point well illustrated by Strobel's description of Muslim women in Mombasa. By 1930, the town contained several discrete cultures, each manifesting and emphasising the ethnic differentiation of its participants.

This idea, of the changing way in which ethnicity was defined, can be seen from another perspective. It is not entirely true to say that residence had defined ethnicity in the nineteenth century, for numbers of people who identified themselves with the Twelve Tribes of the town actually lived on the north and south mainland, intermingling in places with the Mijikenda of those areas. It was rather that their access to land, their obligations and ties to others came through networks that led back to patrons or masters in the town. Similarly the identity of those who moved to the town changed and became a Swahili, urban identity because their access to housing and work in the town came through networks built around ties of adopted kin. Surviving in the town required this change of kin ties and so of identity, and ethnicity was a matter of residence because different places involved different obligations, and the ability to build different networks. Ethnicity was not fixed, for the direction of an individual's obligations, her or his membership of the institutions of kin which defined her or his ethnicity, were not fixed. In seeking to redefine the implications of space, the administration was trying to redirect the obligations and ties of those who moved to Mombasa: effectively, to move their locus of their reproduction to the hinterland of Mombasa.

In doing so, they were faced with a further problem. The reliance of migrants on the networks of the town was a result not only of the previous history of Mombasa, but of the unwillingness of the major employers of Mombasa, the docks at Kilindini and others, to feed, house and otherwise care for their labour force, which instead was reliant on informal (but nonetheless very structured) arrangements within the town itself. The preference of Africans - Mijikenda, ex-slaves and others - for casual work was itself a product of the unwelcome demands of discipline and control, and the occasionally atrocious conditions, associated with other employers, notably the plantation companies of the coast. The movement of migrants to Mombasa to stay within the town, as townspeople, grew also from a desire on the part of younger men and women to improve their own lives by escaping their subordinate position within the rural homestead, a subordination which was in some ways made even worse by colonial rule.

Unwilling to force companies to provide for or effectively control workers in Mombasa, or to interfere with the powers of elder Mijikenda whom they sought to incorporate within the structure of the colonial state, officials sought other ways of forcing Mijikenda into regular working and away from what was seen as the corrupting influence of long-term life in the town. The result was a series of attempts to close off the alternatives to life within the homestead that were offered by Mombasa. This involved a redefinition of who was and was not Swahili, and therefore of who did and did not belong in the town, the changing of the nature of commerce in the town and hinterland, and a town plan intended to restrict the ability of the town population to grow further by adopting ever-greater numbers of migrants.

It was a process assisted by the inability of the networks of the town to cope with the sheer numbers of migrants who came to the town in the 1920s.

The resulting changes did not make the Mijikenda any more amenable to disciplined, regular work. In turning the Mijikenda into temporary migrants in Mombasa, the changes did not turn them into migrants working on contracts, for their established position within the casual labour force allowed them to instead create new networks, bringing them to Mombasa as temporary migrants whose obligations lay in the hinterland, but retaining their place in the casual labour market and avoiding the discipline of regular labour. It was a display of independence and determination to shape their own lives in the face of government pressure that had far-reaching implications. Through this creation of an independent identity within the town, and through their experience of the way in which some Arabs and Swahili had taken advantage of colonial perceptions of ethnic differences to sell land and seek other privileges, the nine hinterland groups came to create a new identity for themselves, distinct from and in many ways hostile to the identity of the Swahili and Arabs of Mombasa and the other towns. The history of the Mijikenda and Mombasa, and of the Mijikenda in Mombasa, really began in the 1930s.

Appendix

Informants

All informants are identified by number, as several of them requested anonymity. In citing interviews, the informant's name is followed by a letter signifying the interview: so that Int 30a is the first interview with informant number 30; Int 5c is the third interview with informant number 5. I will be happy to supply the names of informants to any academic enquirers. Transcripts and notes of interviews are deposited at the University of Nairobi, and I hope to deposit another set in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies.

I give below the salient biographical details of most of the informants. A few have been excluded, some because it would compromise their anonymity but mostly because the interview in question has not been cited and was not particularly interesting.

* * *

Informant 1: member of the el-Kindi clan of the Three Tribes, born in Hailendi about 1910. He said that his grandfather had come to Mombasa from Pemba, having previously come from Oman. His land in Mtongwe was farmed by 'Swahili' without land, whom he also referred to as Duruma and Jibana. Informant's father had bought Duruma cattle and sold them in Mombasa, and had a number of Digo wives. Informant was born in Hailendi, and worked most of his life as a sailor.

Informant 4: Duruma man, born c.1930. Medicinal plant seller in Makupa market, first came to Mombasa in 1960.

Informant 5: Digo man, born in 1915 in Likoni. His grandfather and several great uncles had moved to Mombasa from elsewhere, having converted to Islam. His father was brought up in Mombasa. When 5 was two years old he was sent to Mombasa to live with his father's sister, who was a Swahili, and from there he went to live with his great uncle, who was also a Swahili. Stayed in Mombasa until 1938 when he moved to Likoni, as a result of house demolitions in Mombasa.

Informant 8: Duruma man, born in Kinango, 1933. Left home at the age of nine to live with wajomba in Changamwe, and has since remained in Mombasa.

Informant 9: Digo man, born c.1910. His great-great grandfather was born in Magodzini, but moved to Junju and converted to Islam. Great grandfather of 9 lived in Junju and kidnapped people to sell as slaves. When he stole some Mazrui slaves he was imprisoned in Fort Jesus, from where he escaped with his wife and went to live with his wife's relatives near Ng'ombeni, and then to Pungu. Grandfather of 9 lived in Pungu and worked buying cattle from Duruma and Zigua, and selling them to his tajiri, Khonzi, a Digo Swahili who lived in Mombasa. He also helped a Swahili/Digo woman relative run a coconut plantation. 9's father followed the same business in cattle, selling to a Mombasa Arab who was related to him through his mother, a Digo, of whose dance society he was a member. 9's father then fell out with his neighbours in Pungu over leadership of a Digo dance society, was imprisoned after a fight with them around 1912[?], and on release went with the members of his dance society to found a new village, Shikaadabu. 9 went to Muslim school in Pungu, but ran away from this to Mombasa, where he joined the Kingi beni, his patron being Mwinyi Hasan who was a Three Tribes member but a Digo by

origin. He lived by being a stunt-man for this beni, jumping through fire and the like, before tiring of life in the town and returning to Shikaadabu.

Informant 10: Digo man, born c.1914. His father died in the Carrier Corps, and 10 went to live with his father's brother, who tapped and sold palm-wine, in Ng'ombeni. Father's brother paid his bride price. He worked at Mbaraki carrying coal in the early 1930s.

Informant 12: Digo man, born 1911. His grandfather converted and came to Mombasa, and his father was born in Mombasa, as was 12. His parents lived in Shimanzi(the north-western tip of the island), but their house was demolished in the 1920s. The land was owned by an Arab friend of theirs. After demolition they went to rent land in Majengo. He worked first as an office-messenger for Smith Mackenzie, a job which a friend told him about, and then worked in Cargo, where he became a serang and was an officer in Sadla beni. In the 1940s he started working for the Kenya navy, and in 1945 moved to Likoni from Mombasa.

Informant 13: Digo man, born c.1915. His father was born in Bombo, and left there when 13's grandfather died because his uncles were not looking after him well. He went to Likoni, to a relative of his mother. Here he planted coconut trees, selling copra to Indian and Belushi traders, and giving palm-wine to Duruma migrants who worked his lands. 13 was born here, and his father paid bride-price for him to marry. 13 started working on the Likoni ferry in 1930, and found jobs there for two of his brothers.

Informant 15: Digo man, born 1925. His grandfather born in Digo, then came to Mwakirunge and converted. His father

was born in Mwakirunge. 15 was born in Kisauni, where they lived on the land of an Arab woman from Mwakirunge. His father died when he was young and he has lived since then as a fruit-hawker, buying fruit from tree-owners and taking it to the market. 15 married a Rabai in Kisauni, with his own money.

Informant 16: Giriama man, born c.1918. His great-grandfather was a slave from Malawi, who was freed and settled at Kwa Jomvu mission, and married into Toya clan of the Giriama. They stayed on mission land as Christians, as did all children until 16, who went to school then got a job as a clerk. He bought his own land with the money from this, as on mission land they could not plant trees, and he paid Rabai casuals to work the land.

Informant 18: Duruma man, born c.1910. His maternal grandfather was a Muslim, who lived at Changamwe and herded cattle, and married a slave from Tanzania. He moved to Mariakani to find better grazing for his cattle. 18's mother married a Duruma from near Mariakani, then left him and fled to her mother, who still lived in Changamwe. Her eldest son worked as a hawker to pay back the bride-price to her husband, and this son then became the head of the family. In Changamwe they cultivated a little but made their living by the grandmother selling tobacco and the children hawking fruit and herding goats for others.

Informant 20: Ribe man, born 1900. Born near Mtanganyiko, his mother was a Ribe from Mwakirunge. Family moved to Mwakirunge in the pishi moja famine of 1918 to plant palm trees, and 20 went to stay with his father's sister, who had married an Arab in Mtanganyiko and lived with him in Bondeni, Mombasa. 20 worked as a casual at the docks and as a healer, his clients being directed to him by his

aunt. He married in Mombasa. When his aunt and her husband died, 20 went to live with their children (his cousins) in Junda, because he had no-one else to 'cling' to, as he put it. His wife fell ill there, and his cousins did not help cure her, so he and his wife moved back to Mwakirunge, to his real father, to nurse his wife. She died, and he went back to Mombasa, but worked this time as a court interpreter and later as a Mijikenda member of the Native Tribunal, until he retired back to Mwakirunge.

Informant 21: Jibana man, born 1920. Born at Mgamboni, Jibana. His father converted to Islam under the guidance of an itinerant healer, but never went to Mombasa, and earned a little money selling copra in Kaloleni. 21 went as a young boy to Mombasa and lived in the house of an Arab woman in Bondeni. He and other Mijikenda worked for this woman, hawking perfume which she made. He danced with the Scotchi. 21 left Mombasa in 1937, when the Luo-Shihiri fighting occurred, because Arabs accused him of being a Luo, and he never returned.

Informant 22: Jibana man, born c.1926. Father a Christian, who had come to Tsunguni in Jibana in 1914, after being expelled from the Sabaki area, where he had lived among the Giriama. 22's father died when he was young, and he went to Mombasa because his uncles did not care for him. He worked first as a domestic for an Arab in Bondeni, but he left this job because the wages were so bad, and worked in a shop for an Indian and finally as a casual building labourer, employed by a Giriama serang. Returned to Jibana in 1946, and his uncle paid his bride-price.

Informant 23: Jibana man, born 1923. Father a Christian. 23 was taken for forced labour in 1941 and after this went

to Mombasa, to stay with a Chonyi relative in the house of this relative's uncle, who had converted to Islam and lived in Mombasa. 23 found a job as a casual building labourer, rented a room, and became a serang himself. Remitted wages to his father and maintained a wife in Jibana. In Mombasa he danced in the mavunye, which was headed by a Chonyi, and after five years intermittent labour he retired to Jibana to live off the palm trees planted by his wife.

Informant 24: Ribe woman, born c.1905 in Mwakirunge. Her mother was a Giriama convert to Islam who had been living in Mombasa. When 24 was two her mother left her father and came to Mombasa to live with her sister and brother, and 24 was given to a Three Tribes family to be raised, as the man of this family had originally converted her mother. Her mother was taken back to Mwakirunge by her husband, but fled again when he was conscripted for the Carrier Corps. Mother returned to Mombasa and lived in Kilindini hawking fruit. 24 married once but quickly separated, and lived by selling cooked food outside her house. She earned enough money to build a house and live off the rent from this.

Informant 25: Chonyi man, born c.1908. Father farmed rice and maize and planted coconuts at Mwarakaya. Sold nuts to itinerant Swahili and Indian traders and maize to Indians at Kaloleni. 25 left Mwarakaya as a boy, his father not having enough money to support him, and went to stay with Chonyi relatives in Kuze, Mombasa, who were renting a house from a Swahili. There were no women in this house, the men sharing the cooking. 25 worked first cleaning lighters at Kilindini and then at the coal wharf, where his father's brother was a serangi. After three years he left and went back to Chonyi where his grandfather paid

for him to marry, his father having died. In the 1930s he and his wife went briefly to cut firewood in Kisauni and hawk it in Mombasa, to earn tax money.

Informant 26: Chonyi man, born c.1918 in Mwarakaya. Left because of his parents' poverty and went to Mombasa, to the house of his faher's brother, who worked at Kilindini. He worked for an Indian at the Regal Cinema and then at Kilindini where his serangi was Salim bin Ali. He lived for a while at a house where another Chonyi was staying, this house being the property of the other man's aunt, who was married in the town and had plantations in Changamwe on which the other man worked. 26 also rented a room at Bibi wa Shafi (Mwembe Tayari) for a while. He married in the town, paying his own bride-price, and he danced in the Sadla. In 1959 he left the docks for a monthly job with Shell Oil, but came back to Mwarakaya in 1973, his wife having left him.

Informant 27: Chonyi man, born 1911. Born at Mwarakaya, went in 1928 to work for a few months cleaning lighters at Kilindini. In Mombasa he stayed with his father's cousin, who lived in the town, having been taken there as a child by his father.

Informant 29: Jibana man, born in 1920. Father a judge in the tribunal at Kizurini (Kaloleni). He planted coconuts and benefited from them, and paid his son's bride-price. 29 worked as a court-messenger at Kizurini.

Informant 30: Jibana man, born c.1918 near Kilulu, Jibana. Taken to Mombasa as a boy by his father's brother who worked in Bondeni, having found a job as a domestic through an aunt converted to Islam who lived in Kisauni. 30 lived as a child/domestic servant in the house of a

Swahili family in Kibokoni. He left this job and his aunt found him another in Kisauni, where again he was partly taken into the household as achild but ate separately from the family. He danced in the namba at Kisauni, which was led by a Giriama water-seller. He returned to Kilulu in the 1930s, and worked as a tapper for his father. His father also sold bananas to Mombasa through Mwakirunge, but never sold grain to Mombasa. In 1940 he went for forced labour on a sisal plantation, taking the place of his father, who was ill. In 1945 he moved onto Muses Muhammad's coastal land at Amkeni, and married a Jibana women there, returning to live at Kilulu when his father died.

Informant 31: Rabai man, born c.1925 at Mgumowapadza in Rabai. In the 1936 kabushutsi famine he went to Mombasa to work as a domestic servant, and while he was there his father came every month to collect his wages. His father sold palm-wine to Duruma for grain, and in 1938 he went back to Rabai to work as a tapper for his father.

Informant 32: Rabai man, born c.1910. Father died in the Carrier Corps, and he was brought up by his father's elder brother, who lived by taping and selling palm-wine to Duruma for grain. In the 1918 famine, 32 was sent to Mombasa to sell chickens and buy grain. In the later 1920s, he started work as a tapper in Majengo, his younger brother having worked there first. He worked there intermittently for nine years, renting a room in Majengo from a Duruma man.

Informant 34: Giriama man, ex-sub-chief of Mariakani.

Informant 35: Rabai woman, born c.1920 in Mgumowapadza. As a married woman, she earned money by hawking firewood;

cutting it in Rabai, taking it to Mombasa on her head with other women, and hawking it in Majengo. The earnings from this were her own. She also carried her father-in-law's copra to Mombasa for sale, accompanied by her father-in-law who took all th money from this but sometimes gave her a little for meat.

Informant 36: Rabai man, born c.1906. He was taken by his father to work as a tapper on a plantation in Changamwe in the 1920s. He lived on the plantation and sent his earnings to his father, who paid his bride-price, and 36 also found other Rabai to work on this plantation.

Informant 37: Rabai woman, born c.1898. She was married in about 1916, but shortly afterwards her husband disappeared in the Carrier Corps and she was taken as a wife by his younger brother. He tapped in Rabai, and she farmed and made ghee from the milk of her father-in-law's cattle, which she sold to Indian shop-keepers in Rabai. The takings from this she gave to her father-in-law.

Informant 38: Kambe man, born in 1918 at Pangani (at the bottom of the ridge on the seaward side). His father grew rice, maize and coconuts, selling rice to itinerant Arab traders and transporting copra and bananas to Mombasa through Mwakirunge. His father became a Muslim in Pangani in the 1920s, but 38 went to mission school and became a Christian. In the 1930s he went to work on the sisal estate in Vipingo with an older Kambe man, against the wishes of his father, to whom he did not remit his wages. He worked seven tickets, then returned to Pangani, and his father sent him to school. He then trained as a teacher.

Informant 39: Ribe man, born c.1920 near Chauringo (at the top of the ridge). His father sold palm-wine for money and

also sold coconuts and bananas, but no grain, to Mombasa through Mwakirunge. 39 disliked having to farm for his father, and ran away while still a boy, working first at Rabai as a domestic for the Arab clerk of an Indian trader. The father of this Arab adopted him and took him to Mombasa, converted him to Islam and employed him as a coffee-seller in a stall. He stayed there for nine years and his 'father' paid a bride-price for him. When this man died 39 was chased away by his son, returned to Ribe, and then went to work as a policeman at Kilifi, where he lived well on bribery.

Informant 40: Ribe man, born in 1917 in Kinung'una (on the seaward slope of the ridge). His father was a Christian, had worked briefly as a building labourer in Mombasa, and sold oranges and bananas to Mombasa. He also had land at Chauringo, where he grew sugar-cane. 40 went to Mombasa in 1932 to work as a domestic for a European, alternating this with periods of casual labour pushing a hand-cart. He stayed in the house of some Ribe who had 'revolted': gone to Mombasa and never returned. They lived in Bondeni. He himself always remitted money to his father and returned regularly to Ribe, coming back in 1938 to stay and marry. His father paid the bride-price. In 1940 he joined the army.

Informant 41: Giriama man, born c.1920 at Vuga, in Jibana. His father was a Jibana by birth, but left Jibana in anger as a young man because his sisters were sold as slaves. He joined a Giriama homestead near the Sabaki, and assumed a Giriama identity. In 1914 he was expelled from the Sabaki area and returned to Vuga, but kept his Giriama identity. In Vuga he planted palm trees, and tapped them and sold copra in kaloleni. He also kept cattle, since Giriama marry for cattle. In 1918-19, the father and his wife

worked briefly in Kisauni as building labourers. As a child, 41 herded his father's cattle, until the age of about fourteen, when he learnd to tap. In about 1934 he went to Mombasa with some other Giriama and worked with them for a Swahili building contractor who employed only Giriama labour. He was adopted by this Swahili and lived with him, then he rented his own room and lived there with a succession of women. In the second year of this his father came to Mombasa to find him and made him come back to Vuga, where his father bought him a wife. He never returned to Mombasa, and in 1936 and 1944 was sentenced to forced labour for tax default.

Informant 43: Rabai man, born in Buni, Rabai, in about 1908. In 1923 he went to work as a tapper in Changamwe, on the plantation of a Three Tribes Swahili of Duruma origin. All the tappers there were Rabai, and he rented a room in Majengo, where he lived alone. After another period in Rabai, he worked briefly as a labourer building the new railway station (in 1927?), earning his tax money. After another period in Rabai he went to work at the coaling wharf, first under a Tanzanian serang and then for a Duruma who always found him work. In 1930 he went back to Rabai again and married there, and then in the mid-1930s he went back to Mombasa to work as a tapper in Majengo, and he used his earnings from this to marry again in Rabai.

Informant 44: Kambe man, born c.1910. His grandfather sold rice and millet to Mombasa, and occasionally stayed there in the house of a trading partner. In his time there were few palm trees, and he grew rice for sale to Arab traders, not to eat. 44 was born in Mereni (on the seaward slope of the ridge) but moved with his father to live in kaya Kambe. His father died there, and he then had no-one to

care for him, so he went to work on a sisal plantation on a six-ticket contract. He left there, as the work was hard, and then found a job on the Nyali bridge construction from 1928 to 1929. From this work he returned very briefly to Mereni, but then went to Mombasa to live with his father's younger brother, who had converted to Islam and married a Swahili with his own money, and who lived in Mwembe Kuku. 44 then was adopted by a Muslim Mombasan of slave origins who converted him to Islam, and for whom he worked crewing a tourist boat. They lived in Hailendi and then moved to Kisauni. They both danced in the Sadla beni, of which his 'father' was an official. In 1933 he rejected all this and returned to Kambe to live, never returning to Mombasa.

Informant 45: Giriama man, born in Godoma, about 1908. His father had lived in Mombasa in the magunia famine of 1898-9, staying with a sister who had converted to Islam and married there. He and his wife left when his wife fell ill. After the 1914 rising, the family moved to Mariakani to avoid the fine imposed by the British. From there, troubled by disease in their herds, they moved to Mibani, to a homestead where one of 45's sisters was married. In the 1920s, 45 went to Mombasa to work at the coaling wharf, where he found work through a Kauma serang who was related by marriage to his mother's brother. he danced in a namba group in Mwembe Tayari, and returned to marry and live in his father's homestead.

Informant 46: Giriama man, born before 1913 at Godoma. In the magunia famine his mother and father lived in Kisauni on mission land and they later converted to Christianity. The family moved to Gotani (about 10 miles north-east of Mariakani) after the rising. In the 1920s, after his father had paid his bride-price and his wife had died, 46

joined the Public Works Department as a contract labourer and spent several years working for them before marrying again and returning to Gotani.

Informant 47: Giriama man, born in Gotani in 1912. Family moved to Mwamleka in 1915 to plant palm trees and cassava, for which Gotani is too dry. In 1928 he got a kipande and paid tax, having decided to work to earn bridewealth, and in 1929 he went to Mombasa with other Giriama who were casuals. In Mombasa his father's younger brother introduced him to the Giriama overseer of a quarry at Mkomani (near Changamwe) owned by an Indian. The overseer found him work and a room to rent in the house of a Digo Swahili. In the quarry, they were paid according to how much stone they cut. Each worker worked alone, butthe workforce was organised by three overseers; one Giriama, one Luo and one Nyamwezi, who settled disputes betwen workers over who could cut where. 47 sent his wages to his father, who paid a bride-price for him. His wife stayed in Mwamleka, on his father's homestead. In 1944 he was moved to a new quarry near Mtwapa, and he brought his family to live there too, on the land of a Digo who let them plant palm trees.

Informant 48: Digo man, born c.1909 near Mtwapa (NB other informants insisted that this man was a Kambe). Father converted to Islam in Mtongwe and then came to Mtwapa. 48 went to Mtongwe as a young man, and worked at Kilindini, where his father's elder brother was a serang. He sent his earnings to his father, who invested them in goats and paid a bride-price for 48, who returned to live in Mtwapa at his father's homestead, selling copra to traders and maize to neighbours.

Informant 49: Swahili man, born in Shariani c.1908. His grandfather was a Nyasa slave, who farmed maize at Shariani for his owner, who came after the harvest to collect it. 49 said 'we are the real Swahili'. His father lived on the same land as his grandfather, growing maize and fishing, and one of his father's brothers bought a portion of this land after working for the IBEA Company. 49 went to Mombasa in 1918 to stay with his mother, who had run away from his father and lived unmarried in a house in the Old Town with many other people, the house being owned by a Swahili of Giriama origins. His mother's brother found him a job, as this uncle owned two of the boats which took people to and from the steamers. In 1925 this work became obsolete, and 49 took a monthly job with the Railways and Harbours which he kept until 1957. In 1933 he married a Swahili of Digo origin, with his own money. He played trumpet in the Sadla, of which his mother's brother was an officer.

Informant 50: Digo man, born c.1920. His father was born in Matuga and converted to Islam there, and lived as a fisherman and planted palms. 50 was also born in Matuga and went to Mombasa in the later 1930s, staying first with friends. He worked as a casual porter at the station at this time, and rented a room in the house of a Chonyi Muslim, who took a liking to him and found him work in an eating-house owned by an Arab. The Arab trusted him, and paid a bride-price for him to marry, and in 1945 he moved to Mtwapa where he became overseer of the Arab's land and grain-mill there.

Informant 51: Duruma man, born c.1920 in Rabai. His father was Duruma and his mother half-Duruma and half-Giriama. His mother ran away to Mombasa, where she lived in the house of a Chonyi Muslim woman, and she converted to

Islam. She made a living in the town by hawking water. 51's father died when he was about seven, and his mother took him to Mombasa, where he worked as a domestic in the house of the Chonyi woman. His mother then married a Giriama, and went with him to the Sabaki area, taking 51 part of the way. She left him at the homestead of some of her relatives in Vitengeni, where the work was so hard that he ran away to join the PWD. His mother left her new husband after a few months and went to Changamwe, where she married again and remained until she died. 51 was laid off from the PWD and went to live on Crown Land at Majengo-Mtwapa, where he was arrested for tax default. An Arab paid his taxes and 51 converted to Islam and worked for this Arab as a water-carrier for the mosque.

Informant 53: Hadhrami man, born in Shariani c.1905. his father had come to Mombasa from the Hadhramaut and set up shops in Shariani and around Mtanganyiko, where he bought grain from Mijikenda for shipment to Mombasa. He married several Mijikenda wives. 53's mother was a Kauma, and he is proud of this lineage, as well as of his Arab lineage. His mother's father was killed in a fight with some Duruma over slave-raiding, and his children fled to 53's father for protection, as some of them had already been converted to Islam under his influence. As a boy, 53 worked at Kilindini as a cook's assistant and danced in the Scotchi. He then returned to Shariani and sold water, paying others to farm land there for him. His father's shops went bankrupt after his elder brother struck and abused his mother because she was an 'Mnyika'. 53 divorced his first wife, an Arab, who maltreated his mother because she was a Kauma. 53 then ran a shop for an Arab in Shariani, married a number of Mijikenda wives and finally moved to Kidutani to the land of one of his fathers-in-law, whom he had converted to Islam. He practices as a healer and religious

expert there.

Informant 54: Giriama man, born c.1907, in Mwamleka. In the 1914-18 war his family moved to Madunduni, near Malindi, and in the 1918 famine they returned to Mwamleka but travelled on from there to Mombasa. In Mombasa 54 worked as a building labourer, paid in rice and a little cash, and his mother and father and all their children lived in the house of his father's sister, who had married in Mombasa and converted to Islam. Her husband was also of Giriama origin. 54's mother hawked water in Mombasa, but his father did not work. At the end of the famine, 54's mother and father moved to Kanamai, where other Giriama had settled during the famine. They were later expelled from this land, to which an Arab held title, and they lost all the trees they had planted and moved to Majengo-Mtwapa. 54 did not go to Kanamai with his parents, because he had been converted to Islam and adopted by his Arab employer. He moved into this man's house and worked as an overseer for him. 54's parents pleaded for him to return to the homestead, and he did. He later went to work at the coaling wharf and at Kilindini, encouraged by a Beluchi who had married a relative of his. In this work he danced namba, and sent money to his father, who bought him two wives.

Informant 55: Digo man, born c.1910, in Jumba la Mtwana near Mtwapa. His father was a Muslim who had moved to the area from south of Mombasa. In 1926 he went to Mombasa, worked as a fisherman on a boat, and danced in the Scotchi. Before going to Mombasa he had fished for his father and taken their catch to Mombasa to sell to a Digo at the fish-market. When he moved to Mombasa he stayed with this man, whom he called 'father' as well as tajiri, and he worked on his boat, sharing the earnings with him.

This man also owned several houses in Bondeni and performed spirit ceremonies. 55 spent almost all his money in town, on women and dancing, but occasionally sent a little to his father. He stayed in Mombasa until about 1950, without marrying. Then his Mombasan father died, and 55 returned to Mtwapa, as there was too much competition fishing in Mombasa. He married in Mtwapa and stayed in his father's homestead.

Informant 56: Rabai man, born in Jitoni (towards Miritini) c.1908. His father was a drunkard whose only occupation was tapping, and who mortgaged his palm-trees to buy another wife for himself. 56's father bought him one wife, but she died, and then there was no money either to buy another wife or to feed the child the first wife had left. In 1929 he went to Mombasa, where he found work at Kilindini. When he missed work he scavenged crabs and fruit to eat. In Mombasa he rented part of a half-built house to sleep in, and sent wages back to his mother to support the child. Then a friend found him a job as a hire-purchase hawker, working for an Indian on a monthly wage, but in 1935 he left this job and Mombasa because he feared that he would grow old in Mombasa, with no place of his own, 'like an ex-slave'. He went to Jitoni, and started growing sugar-cane, and he joined the Seventh-Day Adventist church, who lent him the money to marry again. The the land at Jitoni, to which he had no claim, was taken by the Veterinary Department, and he went to Buni, on top of the ridge, and planted palm trees.

Informant 58: Digo man, born in Waa c. 1915. His father was a Muslim and the chief of Waa, and as a boy 58 learned at an Islamic school to plait baskets and sell them in Mombasa. His father bought him a wife, and they lived on his father's homestead, but in the early 1930s he went to

work in Mombasa, disliking his dependence on his father. He lived first at Likoni with a great-aunt, sharing a room with seven or eight other Digo men, and then he moved to Majengo to rent his own room. He worked as a casual at Kilindini and danced in the Sadla. Another Digo then found him a job working as a hawker for an Arab, and he left Kilindini. In the hawking job he worked with Digo, Giriama and Taita, but he joined another beni group (possibly a sub-group of Sadla) called MP. He became very close to his employer and adopted an Arabic genealogy, and stopped sending money to his wife in Waa, spending his money on town women instead. The special treatment he received inspired the enmity of his fellows, who persuaded the employer's business associate, another Arab, that 58 was seducing his wife. 58 was fired, sometime after 1937, went to live in Waa and never returned to Mombasa.

Informant 59: Digo woman, born in Ukunda c.1915. Her parents were Muslim, and died when she was young. She moved to her father's brother at Magodzoni, and was then taken by her elder sister to Changamwe, to stay with another brother of her father, who was living on the land of a Swahili, guarding it but doing no work and paying no rent. The land was worked by 'Wanyika': migrant Duruma. Her sister was married, and her husband worked as a nut harvester, while 59, still a young girl, worked in the household for her sister. They then moved to her sister's father-in-law's homestead in Mtongwe, where she was married. Her husband soon died and she went to Mombasa in the mid-1930s, and lived there for three years in a house owned by a woman of Digo origins. She lived with a succession of young men and was a member of a spirit-possession society. Then she moved to Waa, where her sister's husband had land and she had palm trees, and she married again.

Informant 60: Digo man, born in Matuga about 1920. His father was a drunkard, and as a boy he worked helping his mother carry charcoal to sell in Mombasa. He then ran away to a relative of his mother's who was an ex-slave of Ali bin Salim. She lived in Hailendi and still worked for Ali bin Salim. Through her he found work with other Arabs, as an errand-boy, but his mother's brother persuaded him to return. He and his mother then lived as small-traders: he earned money as a coconut harvester, being paid one nut for each tree he picked, and they invested his earnings in chickens which they took to Mombasa for sale. They sold chickens and charcoal to Hadhrami in Mombasa and brought tobacco and dried fish back to Matuga to sell. This precarious capital accumulation was twice disrupted by 60 marrying and then leaving his wife, and was also threatened by the demands of relatives for money. In 1946, he made a brief foray into the Mombasan market, by lending money to a Digo stall-holder at Mwembe Tayari to buy more goods, but they abandoned the stall in the 1947 strike and then could not get another.

Informant 61: member of the Three Tribes.

Informant 64: ex-chief of Kinango.

Informant 66: Duruma man, born in Mlafyeni c.1918. His father died when he was young, brought up by father's brother. As a boy, he herded goats in the homestead, then the homestead head lent him money to buy chickens and start a business selling them in Mombasa. He gave the profits to the homestead head, who used them to buy him a wife. 66 walked to and from Mombasa in this trade, sleeping on the way there and back, but not usually in Mombasa, where he feared muggers and mumiani. When he started this business he was introduced by another Duruma

to a particular Hadhrami buyer, but he found himself another tajiri who offered better prices. When the homestead head could not afford to pay tax for him, he worked as a casual agricultural labourer for other Duruma and for Digo, sometimes in the coastal strip. In the late 1940s he worked for the PWD, after he had set up his own homestead on the death of the homestead head.

Informant 67: Digo man, born in Dar es Salaam c.1910. His father had gone there from Mombasa. In about 1918 his parents returned to Mombasa, but he went to Tanga and found work as a servant for a European hunter. This man was killed by an elephant near Moshi, and 67 went to Mombasa to stay with his parents in Hailendi. His father died almost immediately thereafter. His elder brothers were in Mombasa, and one of them taught in a Swahili Islamic school. 67 worked at the coaling wharf, then as a winch-man, and worked at Kilindini intermittently until the 1950s. He danced in the Sadla, and Salim bin Ali was his serangi. In later life he started to farm at Ukunda, on the land of his mother's clan, and he grew annual crops there for the Mombasan market, but in old age he has returned to live in Mombasa and rents out the land at Ukunda.

Informant 68: Giriama man, born c.1935, father had mortaged his trees to Muses Muhammed.

Informant 71: man, refused to identify any group membership. Born in Takaungu about 1910. His father worked as a ship's captain in Takaungu (possibly a slave?). In 1920 his father died and 71 came to Mombasa to go to Muslim school, and stayed with his elder brother in Mwembe Kuku. His elder brother worked in the godowns at Kilindini and he himself found work at Kilindini, through a serang

who knew his mother's brother as a child, and who became his adoptive father. 71 stayed on the docks until 1973.

Informant 72: Omani Arab man.

Informant 73: Duruma man, born in Beponda c. 1938. His father had been taken to work on the docks in the 1930s by an in-law, and had lived in Majengo at the house of a Muslim Kauma woman.

Informant 74: Digo woman, sister of informant 67. Born in Dar es Salaam c.1912. Unlike 67, she said that their father was a Yao slave who had run away from Mombasa and married a Digo woman in Ukunda, and their move to Dar seems to have ben connected with the flight there of some Mazrui after the 1895 revolt. 74 came back to Mombasa with her parents and then was brought up by a Duruma woman in Hailendi, who was part of a spirit possession group. This woman had been taken to Takaungu as a slave, then had been taken from there by an Arab who married her to a Mijikenda convert to Islam. She later left this husband and retired to farm at Tsunza. 74 was brought up by her and by her mama wa kumwosha, who taught her correct behaviour at puberty and for whom she did domestic work. This woman was in a dance society with the woman who brought her up. 67 was then married to a Pemba man, whom she managed to leave. She then was married to a Mazrui, who took great care of her. When he died she left his house, because she thought his relatives had murdered him by witchcraft for his money, and she was frightened they would kill her too. Then she lived by casual work at the coffee-curing factory and by food-selling, remaining in Mombasa until now.

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